Spurgeon's Sermons

The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit

By Rev. C. H. Spurgeon

Volume XIV

Preached primarily at
The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington
1868

SPURGEON'S SERMONS

VOLUME XIV

THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT

BY

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

(1834 – 1892)

THIS COLLECTION CONTAINS NUMBERS 788 THROUGH 847 OF C. H. SPURGEON'S PUBLISHED SERMONS.

THESE SERMONS WERE PREACHED BEFORE CONGREGATIONS IN 1868. THEY WERE ALSO PUBLISHED AS PAMPHLETS DURING THOSE YEARS, AND LATER COMPILED IN BOOK FORM AS,

***THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT,* VOL. XIV**

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TO
THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,
IN THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,
BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,
WORLD WITHOUT END,
AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER,
AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON,
THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST,
THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF
THE FREE GRACE OF GOD,
HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, January 5th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"We know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only that, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." — Romans 8:22-23

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Romans 8]

MY VENERABLE FRIEND, who, on the first Sabbath of the year, always sends me a text to preach from, has on this occasion selected one which it is very far from easy to handle. The more I have read it, the more certainly have I come to the conclusion that this is one of the things in Paul's epistles to which Peter referred when he said, "Wherein are some things hard to be understood." However, dear friends, we have often found that the nuts which are hardest to crack have the sweetest kernels, and when the bone seems as if it could never be broken, the richest marrow has been found within. So it may be possible this morning; so it will be if the Spirit of God shall be our Instructor, and fulfill His gracious promise to "lead us into all truth."

The whole creation is fair and beautiful even in its present condition. I have no sort of sympathy with those who cannot enjoy the beauties of nature. Climbing the lofty Alps, or wandering through the charming valley, skimming the blue sea, or traversing the verdant forest, we have felt that this world, however desecrated by sin, was evidently built to be a temple of God, and the grandeur and the glory of it plainly declare that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." Like the marvelous structures of Palmyra of Baalbek, in the far off East, the earth in ruins reveals a magnificence which betokens a royal Founder, and an extraordinary purpose. Creation glows with a thousand beauties, even in its present fallen condition; yet clearly enough it is not as when it came from the Maker's hands—the slime of the serpent is on it all—this is not the world which God pronounced to be "very good." We hear of tornadoes, of earthquakes, of tempests, of volcanoes, of avalanches, and of the sea which devours its thousands: there is sorrow on the sea, and there is misery on the land; and into the highest palaces as well as the poorest cottages, death, the insatiable, is shooting his arrows, while his quiver is still full to bursting with future woes. It is a sad, sad world. The curse has fallen on it since the fall, and it brings forth thorns and thistles, not from its soil alone, but from all that comes of it. earth wears upon her brow, like Cain of old, the brand of transgression. Sad would it be to our thoughts if it were always to be so. If there were no future to this world as well as to ourselves, we might be glad to escape from it, counting it to be nothing better than a huge penal colony, from which it would be a thousand mercies for both body and soul to be emancipated. At this present time, the groaning and travailing which are general throughout creation, are deeply felt among the sons of men. The dreariest thing you can read is the newspaper. I heard of one who sat up at the end of last year to groan last year out; it

was ill done, but in truth it was a year of groaning, and the present one opens with turbulence and distress. We heard of abundant harvests, but we soon discovered that they were all a dream, and that there would be very little in the worker's cottage. And now, what with strifes between employees and employers which are banishing trade from England, and what with political convulsions which unhinge everything, the vessel of the State is drifting fast to the shallows. May God in His mercy put His hand to the helm of the ship, and steer her safely. There is a general wail among nations and peoples. You can hear it in the streets of the city. The Lord reigns, or we might lament right bitterly.

The apostle tells us that not only is there a groan from creation, but this is shared in by God's people. We shall notice in our text, first, *to what the saints have already attained;* secondly, *in what we are deficient:* and thirdly, *what is the state of mind of the saints in regard to the whole of the matter.*

I. TO WHAT THE SAINTS HAVE ATTAINED.

We were once an undistinguished part of the creation, subject to the same curse as the rest of the world, "heirs of wrath, even as others." But distinguishing grace has made a difference where no difference naturally was; we are now no longer treated as condemned criminals, but as children and heirs of God. We have received a divine life, by which we are made partakers of the divine nature, having "escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." The Spirit of God has come unto us so that our "bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit." God dwells in us, and we are one with Christ. We have at this present moment in us certain priceless things which distinguish us as believers in Christ from all the rest of God's creatures. *"We have,"* says the text, not, "we hope and trust sometimes we have," nor, "possibly we may have," but, "we have, we know we have, we are sure we have." Believing

in Jesus, we speak confidently, we have unspeakable blessings given to us by the Father of spirits. Not we *shall have,* but *we have*. True, many things are yet in the future, but even at this present moment, we have obtained an inheritance; we have already in our possession a divine heritage which is the beginning of our eternal portion. This is called "the first fruits of the Spirit," by which I understand the first works of the Spirit in our souls. Brothers and sisters, we have repentance, that gem of the first water. We have Faith, that priceless, precious jewel. We have Hope, which sparkles, a Hope most sure and steadfast. We have love, which sweetens all the rest. We have that work of the Spirit within our souls which always comes before admittance into glory. We are already made "new creatures in Christ Jesus" by the effectual working of the mighty power of God the Holy Spirit. This is called the first fruit because it *comes first.* As the wave sheaf was the first of the harvest, so the spiritual life which we have, and all the divine graces which adorn that life, are the first gifts, the first operations of the Spirit of God in our souls. We *have* this by His grace.

It is called "first fruits," again, because *the first fruits were always the pledge of the harvest.* As soon as the Israelite had plucked the first handful of ripe wheat, they were to him so many proofs that the harvest was already come. He looked forward with glad anticipation to the time when the wagon should creak beneath the sheaves, and when the harvest home should be shouted at the door of the barn. So, brothers and sisters, when God gives us "faith, hope, love"—these three, when He gives us "whatever things are pure, lovely, and of good report," as the work of the Holy Spirit, these are to us the guarantee of the coming glory. If you have the Spirit of God in your soul, you may rejoice over it as the pledge and token of the fullness of

bliss and perfection "which God has prepared for them who love Him."

It is called "first fruits," again, because *these were always holy to the Lord.* The first ears of corn were offered to the Most High, and surely our new nature, with all its powers, must be regarded by us as a consecrated thing. The new life which God has given to us is not ours that we should ascribe its excellence to our own merit: the new nature is Christ's peculiarly; as it is Christ's Image and Christ's creation, so it is for Christ's glory alone. That secret we must keep separate from all earthly things; that treasure which He has committed to us we must watch both night and day against those profane intruders who would defile the consecrated ground. We must stand upon our watchtower and cry aloud to the Strong for strength, that the adversary may be repelled, that the sacred castle of our heart may be for the habitation of Jesus, and Jesus alone. We have a sacred secret which belongs to Jesus as the first fruits belong to Jehovah.

Brothers and sisters, the work of the Spirit is called "first fruits," because *the first fruits were not the harvest.* No Jew was ever content with the first fruits. He was content with them for what they were, but the first fruits enlarged his desires for the harvest. If he had taken the first fruits home, and said, "I have all I need," and had rested satisfied month after month, he would have given proof of madness, for the first fruit does but whet the appetite—does but stir up the desire it never was meant to satisfy. So, when we get the first works of the Spirit of God, we are not to say, "I have attained, I am already perfect, there is nothing further for me to do, or to desire." No, my brothers and sisters, all that the most advanced of God's people know as yet, should but excite in them an insatiable thirst after more. My brother with great experience, my sister with enlarged acquaintance with Christ, you have not yet known the harvest, you have only reaped the first handful of corn. Open your

mouth wide, and God will fill it! Enlarge your expectations—seek great things from the God of heaven—and He will give them to you; but by no means fold your arms in sloth, and sit down upon the bed of carnal security. Forget the steps you have already trod, and reach forward towards that which is ahead, looking unto Jesus.

Even this first point of what the saint has attained will help us to understand why it is that he groans. Did I not say that we have not received the whole of our portion, and that what we have received is to the whole no more than one handful of wheat is to the whole harvest, a very gracious pledge, but nothing more? Therefore it is that we groan. Having received something, we desire more. Having reaped handfuls, we long for sheaves. For this very reason, the fact that we are saved, we groan for something beyond. Did you hear that groan just now? It is a traveler lost in the deep snow on the mountain pass. No one has come to rescue him, and indeed he has fallen into a place from which escape is impossible. The snow is numbing his limbs, and his soul is breathed out with many a groan. Keep that groan in your ear, for I want you to hear another. The traveler has reached the hospice. He has been charitably received, he has been warmed at the fire, he has received abundant provision, he is warmly clothed. There is no fear of storm, that grand old hospice has outstood many a thundering storm. The man is perfectly safe, and quite content, as far as that goes, and exceedingly grateful to think that he has been rescued; but yet I hear him groan because he has a wife and children down in yonder plain, and the snow is lying too deep for traveling, and the wind is howling, and the blinding snow flakes are falling so thickly that he cannot continue his journey. Ask him whether he is happy and content. He says, "Yes, I am happy and grateful. I have been saved from the snow. I do not wish for anything more than I have here. I am perfectly satisfied

as far as this goes, but I long to look upon my household, and to be once more in my own sweet home, and until I reach it, I shall not cease to groan." Now, the first groan which you heard was deep and dreadful, as though it were fetched from the abyss of hell; that is the groan of the ungodly man as he perishes, and leaves all his dear delights; but the second groan is so softened and sweetened, that it is rather the note of desire than of distress. Such is the groan of the believer, who, though rescued and brought into the hospice of divine mercy, is longing to see his Father's face without a veil between, and to be united with the happy family on the other side the Jordan, where they rejoice forevermore. When the soldiers of Godfrey of Bouillon came in sight of Jerusalem, it is said they shouted for joy at the sight of the holy city. For that very reason they began to groan. Do you ask why? It was because they longed to enter it. Having once looked upon the city of David, they longed to carry the holy city by storm, to overthrow the crescent, and place the cross in its place. He who has never seen the New Jerusalem, has never clapped his hands with holy ecstasy, he has never sighed with the unutterable longing which is expressed in words like these—

"O my sweet home, Jerusalem,
Would God I were in you!
Would God my woes were at an end,
Your joys that I might see!"

Take another picture to illustrate that the obtaining of something makes us groan after more. An exile, far away from his native country, has been long forgotten, but all of a sudden a vessel brings him the pardon of his monarch, and presents from his friends who have called him to remembrance. As he turns over each of these love tokens, and as he reads the words

of his reconciled prince, he asks, "When will the vessel sail to take me back to my native shore?" If the vessel tarries, he groans over the delay; and if the voyage is tedious, and adverse winds blow back the ship from the white cliffs of Albion, his thirst for his own sweet land compels him to groan. So it is with your children when they look forward to their holidays; they are not unhappy or dissatisfied with the school—but yet they long to be at home. Do you not remember how, in your schoolboy days, you used to make a little almanac with a square for every day, and how you always crossed off the day as soon as ever it began, as though you would try and make the distance from your joy as short as possible? You groaned for it—not with the unhappy groan that marks one who is to perish, but with the groan of one who, having tasted of the sweets of home, is not content until again he shall be indulged with the fullness of them. So you see, beloved, that because we have the "first fruits of the Spirit," for that very reason, if for no other, we cannot help but groan for that blissful period which is called "the adoption, the redemption of our body."

II. Our second point rises before us—**IN WHAT ARE BELIEVERS DEFICIENT?** We are deficient in those things for which we groan and wait! And these appear to be at least four.

The first is that *this body of ours is not delivered.* Brothers and sisters, as soon as a man believes in Christ, he is no longer under the curse of the law. As to his spirit, sin has no more dominion over him, and the law has no further claims against him. His soul is translated from death unto life, but the body, this poor flesh and blood, does it not remain as before? Not in one sense, for the members of our body which were instruments of unrighteousness, become by sanctification, the instruments of righteousness unto the glory of God; and the body, which was once a workshop for Satan, becomes a temple for the Holy Spirit, in which He dwells; but we are all perfectly

aware that the grace of God makes no change in the body in other respects. It is just as subject to sickness as before, pain travels quite as sharply through the heart of the saint as the sinner, and he who lives near to God is no more likely to enjoy bodily health than he who lives at a distance from Him. The greatest piety cannot preserve a man from growing old, and although in grace he may be "like a young cedar, fresh and green," yet the body will have its gray hairs, and the strong man will be brought to totter on the staff. The body is still subject to the evils which Paul mentions, when he says of it that it is subject to corruption, to dishonor, to weakness, and is still a natural body.

Nor is this a little thing, for the body has a depressing effect upon the soul. A man may be full of faith and joy spiritually, but I will defy him under some forms of disease to feel as he would. The soul is like an eagle, to which the body acts as a chain, preventing it from mounting. Moreover, the appetites of the body have a natural affinity to that which is sinful. The natural desires of the human frame are not in themselves sinful, but through the degeneracy of our nature, they very readily lead us into sin, and through the corruption which is in us, even the natural desires of the body become a very great source of temptation. The body is redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, it is redeemed by price, but it has not as yet been redeemed by power. It still lingers in the realm of bondage, and is not brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Now this is the cause of our groaning and mourning, for the soul is so married to the body that when it is itself delivered from condemnation, it sighs to think that its poor friend, the body, should still be under the yoke. If you were a free man, and had married a wife, a slave, you could not feel perfectly content, but the more you enjoyed the sweets of freedom yourself, the more would you pine that she should still be in

slavery. So is it with the soul, it is free from corruption and death; but the poor body is still under the bondage of corruption, and therefore the soul groans until the body itself shall be set free. Will it ever be set free? O my beloved, do not ask the question. This is the Christian's brightest hope. Many believers make a mistake when they long to die and long for heaven. Those things may be desirable, but they are not the ultimatum of the saints. The saints in heaven are perfectly free from sin, and, as far as they are capable of it, they are perfectly happy; but a disembodied spirit never can be perfect until it is reunited to its body. God made man not pure spirit, but body and spirit, and the spirit alone will never be content until it sees its corporeal frame raised to its own condition of holiness and glory. Think not that our longings here below are not shared in by the saints in heaven. They do not groan, as far as any pain can be, but they long with greater intensity than you and I long, for the "adoption, the redemption of our body." People have said there is no faith in heaven, and no hope—they know not what they say—in heaven it is that faith and hope have their fullest swing and their brightest sphere, for glorified saints believe in God's promise, and hope for the resurrection of the body. The apostle tells us that "they without us cannot be made perfect"; that is, until our bodies are raised, theirs cannot be raised, until we get our adoption day, neither can they get theirs. The Spirit says, Come, and the bride says, Come—not the bride on earth only, but the bride in heaven says the same, bidding the happy day speed on when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For it is true, beloved, the bodies that have molded into dust will rise again, the fabric which has been destroyed by the worm shall rise into a nobler being, and you and I, though the worms devour this body, shall in our flesh behold our God!—

"These eyes shall see Him in that day,
The God that died for me;
And all my rising bones shall say,
'Lord, who is liken to Thee?'"

Thus we are sighing that our entire manhood, in its trinity of spirit, soul, and body, may be set free from the last vestige of the fall; we long to put off corruption, weakness, and dishonor, and to wrap ourselves in incorruption, in immortality, in glory, in the spiritual body which the Lord Jesus Christ will bestow upon all His people. You can understand in this sense why it is that we groan, for if this body really is still, though redeemed, a captive, and if it is one day to be completely free, and to rise to amazing glory, well may those who believe in this precious doctrine groan after it as they wait for it.

But, again, there is another point in which the saint is deficient as yet, namely, *in the manifestation of our adoption.* You observe the text speaks of *waiting* for the adoption; and another text further back, explains what that means, waiting for the manifestation of the children of God. In this world, saints are God's children, but you cannot see that they are so, except by certain moral characteristics. That man is God's child, but though he is a prince of the royal blood, his garments are those of toil—the smock frock, or the corduroy jacket; yonder woman is one of the daughters of the King, but see how pale she is, what furrows are upon her brow! Many of the daughters of pleasure are far fairer than she! How is this? The adoption is not yet manifested, the children are not yet openly declared. Among the Romans a man might adopt a child, and that child might be treated as his for a long time; but there was a second adoption in public, when the child was brought before the constituted authorities, and in the presence of spectators its ordinary garments which it had worn before were taken off,

and the father who took it to be his child put on garments suitable to the condition of life in which it was to live. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be." We have not yet the royal robes which become the princes of the blood; we are wearing in this flesh and blood just what we wore as the sons of Adam; but we know that when *He* shall appear who is the "first born among many brethren," we shall be like He, that is, God will dress us all as He dresses His eldest son—"We shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." Cannot you imagine that a child taken from the lowest ranks of society, who is adopted by a Roman senator, will be saying to himself, "I wish the day were come when I shall be publicly revealed as the child of my new father; then I shall leave off these plebeian garments, and be robed as becomes my senatorial rank." Happy in what he has received, for that very reason he groans to get the fullness of what is promised him. So it is with us today. We are waiting till we shall put on our proper garments, and shall be manifest as the children of God. You are young princes, but you have not been crowned yet. You are young brides, but the marriage day is not come, and by the love your spouse bears you, you are led to long and to sigh for the marriage day. Your very happiness makes you groan; your joy, like a swollen spring, longs to leap up like some Iceland geyser climbing to the skies, and it heaves and groans within your spirit for lack of space and room by which to manifest itself to men.

There is a third thing in which we are deficient, namely, *liberty,* the glorious liberty of the children of God. The whole creation is said to be groaning for its share in that freedom. You and I are also groaning for it. Brothers and sisters, we *are* free! "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." But our liberty is incomplete. When Napoleon was on the island of St. Helena, he was watched by many guards, but

after many complaints, he enjoyed comparative liberty, and walked alone. Yet, what liberty was it? Liberty to walk round the rock of St. Helena, but nothing more; you and I are free, but what is our liberty? As to our spirits, we have liberty to soar into the third heaven, and sit in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus; but as for our bodies, we can only roam about this narrow cell of earth, and feel that it is not the place for us. Napoleon had been used to gilded halls, and all the pomp and glory of imperial state, and it was hard to be reduced to a handful of servants. Just so, we are kings—we are of the blood imperial; but we have not our proper state and becoming dignities—we have not our royalties here. We go to our lowly homes; we meet with our brothers and sisters here in their earth-built temples; and we are content, as far as these things go, still, how can kings be content till they mount their thrones? How can a heavenly one be content till he ascends to the heavens? How shall a celestial spirit be satisfied until it sees celestial things? How shall the heir of God be content till he rests on his Father's bosom, and is filled with all the fullness of God?

I wish you now to observe that we are linked with the creation. Adam in this world was in liberty, perfect liberty; nothing confined him; paradise was exactly fitted to be his seat. There were no wild beasts to frighten him, no rough winds to cause him injury, no blighting heats to bring him harm; but in this present world everything is contrary to us. Evidently we are exotics here. Ungodly men prosper well enough in this world; they root themselves and spread themselves like green bay trees; it is their native soil; but the Christian needs the hothouse of divine grace to keep him alive at all—and out in the world he is like some strange foreign bird, native of a warm and sultry climate, that being let loose here under our wintry skies is ready to perish. Now, God will one day change our

bodies and make them fit for our souls, and then He will change this world itself. I must not speculate, for I know nothing about it; but it is no speculation to say that we look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwells righteousness; and that there will come a time when the lion shall eat straw like an ox, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. We expect to see this world that is now so full of sin as to be an Aceldama, a field of blood, turned into a paradise, a garden of God. We believe that the tabernacle of God will be among men, that He will dwell among them, and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. We expect to see the New Jerusalem descend out of heaven from God. In this very place, where sin has triumphed, we expect that grace will much more abound. Perhaps after those great fires of which Peter speaks when he says, "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," earth will be renewed in more than pristine loveliness. Perhaps since matter may not be annihilated, and probably cannot be, but will be as immortal as spirit, this very world will become the place of an eternal jubilee, from which perpetual hallelujahs shall go up to the throne of God. If such is the bright hope that cheers us, we may well groan for its realization, crying out—

"O long-expected day, begin;
Dawn on these realms of woe and sin."

I shall not enlarge further, except to say that *our glory* is not yet revealed, and that is another subject of sighing. "The glorious liberty" may be translated, "The liberty of glory." brothers and sisters, we are like warriors fighting for the victory; we share not, as yet, in the shout of them who triumph. Even up in heaven they have not their full reward. When a Roman general came home from the wars, he entered Rome by stealth,

and slept at night, and tarried by day, perhaps for a week or two, among his friends. He went through the streets, and people whispered, "That is the general, the valiant one," but he was not publicly acknowledged. But, on a certain set day, the gates were thrown wide open, and the general, victorious from the wars in Africa or Asia, with his snow-white horses bearing the trophies of his many battles, rode through the streets, which were strewn with roses, while the music sounded, and the multitudes, with glad acclaim, accompanied him to the Capitol. That was his triumphant entry. Those in heaven, have, as it were, stolen there. They are blessed, but they have not had their public entrance. They are waiting till their Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel, and the voice of God; then shall their bodies rise; then shall the world be judged; then shall the righteous be divided from the wicked; and then, in marvelous procession, leading captivity captive for the last time, the Prince at their head, the whole of the blood-washed host, wearing their white robes, and bearing their palms of victory, shall march up to their crowns and to their thrones, to reign forever and ever! After this consummation the believing heart is panting, groaning, and sighing.

Now, I think I hear somebody say, "You see these godly people who profess to be so happy and so safe, they still groan, and they are obliged to confess it." Yes, that is quite true, and it would be a great mercy for you if you knew how to groan in the same way. If you were half as happy as a groaning saint is, you might be content to groan on forever. I showed you, just now, the difference between a groan and a groan. I will show you yet again. Go into yonder house. Listen at that door on the left, there is a deep, hollow, awful groan. Go to the next house, and hear another groan. It seems to be, as far as we can judge, much more painful than the first, and has anguish in it of the

severest sort. How are we to judge between them? We will come again in a few days: as we are entering the first house we see weeping faces and flowing tears, a coffin, and a hearse. Ah, it was the groan of death! We will go into the next. Ah, what is this? Here is a smiling cherub, a father with a gladsome face: if you may venture to look at the mother, see how her face smiles for joy that a man is born into the world to cheer a happy and rejoicing family. There is all the difference between the groan of death and the groan of life. Now, the apostle sets the whole matter before us when he said, "The whole creation groans," and you know what comes after that, "travails." There is a result to come of it of the best kind. We are panting, longing after something greater, better, nobler, and it is coming. It is not the pain of death we feel, but the pain of life! We are thankful to have such a groaning.

The other night, just before Christmas, two men who were working very late, were groaning in two very different ways, one of them saying, "Ah, there's a poor Christmas day in store for me; my house is full of misery." He had been a drunk, a spendthrift, and had not a penny to bless himself with, and his house had become a little hell; he was groaning at the thought of going home to such a scene of quarrelling and distress. Now, his fellow workman, who worked beside him, as it was getting very late, wished himself at home, and therefore groaned. A shop mate asked, "What's the matter?" "Oh, I want to get home to my dear wife and children. I have such a happy house; I do not like to be out of it." The other might have said, "Ah, you pretend to be a happy man, and here you are groaning." "Yes," he could say, "and a blessed thing it would be for you if you had the same thing to groan after that I have." So the Christian has a good Father, a blessed, eternal home, and groans to get to it; and ah, there is more joy in the groan of a Christian after heaven than in all the mirth and merriment, and

dancing, and lewdness of the ungodly when their mirth is at its greatest height. We are like the dove that flutters, and is weary, but thank God we have an Ark to go to. We are like Israel in the wilderness, and footsore, but blessed be God, we are on the way to Canaan. We are like Jacob looking at the wagons, and the more we look at the wagons, the more we long to see Joseph's face; and our groaning after Jesus is a blessed groan, for—

"'Tis heaven on earth, 'tis heaven above,
To see His face, and taste His love."

III. Now I shall conclude with **WHAT OUR STATE OF MIND IS.**

A Christian's experience is like a rainbow, made up of drops of the grief of earth, and beams of the bliss of heaven. It is a checkered scene, a garment of many colors. He is sometimes in the light and sometimes in the dark. The text says, "we groan." I have told you what that groan is, I need not explain it further. But it is added, "We groan *within ourselves."* It is not the hypocrite's groan, when he goes mourning everywhere, wanting to make people believe that he is a saint because he is wretched. We groan *within ourselves.* Our sighs are sacred things; These griefs and sighs are too hallowed for us to tell abroad in the streets. We keep our longings to our Lord, and to our Lord alone. We groan within ourselves. It appears from the text that this groaning is universal among the saints: there are no exceptions; to a greater or less extent we all feel it. He who is most endowed with worldly goods, and he who has the fewest; he who is blessed in health, and he who is racked with sickness; we all have in our measure an earnest inward groaning towards the redemption of our body.

Then the apostle says we are "waiting," by which I understand that we are not to be like Jonah or Elijah, when they said, "Let me die," nor are we to sit still and look for the end of the day because we are tired of work; nor are we to become impatient, and wish to escape from our present pains and sufferings till the will of the Lord is done. We are to groan after perfection, but we are to wait patiently for it, knowing that what the Lord appoints is best. Waiting implies being ready. We are to stand at the door expecting the beloved to open it and take us away to Himself.

In the next verse we are described as hoping. We are saved by hope. The believer continues to hope for the time when death and sin shall no more annoy his body; when, as his soul has been purified, so shall his body be, and his prayer shall be heard, that the Lord would sanctify him wholly—body, soul, and spirit.

Now, beloved, the practical use to which I put this somewhat rambling, I am afraid, discourse of this morning is just this. Here is a test for us all. You may judge of a man by what he groans after. Some men groan after wealth, they worship Mammon. Some groan continually under the troubles of life; they are merely impatient—there is no virtue in that. Some men groan because of their great losses or sufferings; well, this may be nothing but a rebellious smarting under the rod, and if so, no blessing will come of it. But the man who yearns after more holiness, the man who sighs after God, the man who groans after perfection, the man who is discontented with his sinful self, the man who feels he cannot be easy till he is made like Christ; that is the man who is blessed indeed. May God help you, and help me, to groan all our days with that kind of groaning. I have said before, there is heaven in it, and though the word sounds like sorrow, there is a depth of joy concealed within—

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee;
And then I would, O that I might,
A constant weeper be."

I do not know a more beautiful sight to be seen on earth than a man who has served his Lord many years, and who, having grown gray in service, feels that in the order of nature, he must soon be called home. He is rejoicing in the first fruits of the Spirit which he has obtained, but he is panting after the full harvest of the Spirit which is guaranteed to him. I think I see him sitting on a jutting crag by the edge of Jordan, listening to the harpers on the other side, and waiting till the pitcher shall be broken at the cistern, and the wheel at the fountain, and the spirit shall depart to God who made it. A wife waiting for her husband's footsteps; a child waiting in the darkness of the night till its mother comes to give it the evening's kiss, are portraits of our waiting. It is a pleasant and precious thing so to wait and so to hope.

I fear that some of you, seeing you have never come and put your trust in Christ, will have to say, when your time comes to die, what Wolsey is said to have declared, with only one word of alteration—

"O Cromwell, Cromwell!
Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served the world, He would not, in my age,
Have left me naked to my enemies."

Oh, before those days fully come, quit the service of the master who never can reward you except with death! Cast your arms around the cross of Christ, and give your heart to God,

and then, come what may, I am persuaded that "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." While you shall for a while sigh for more of heaven, you shall soon come to the abodes of blessedness where sighing and sorrow shall flee away.

The Lord bless this assembly, for Christ's sake. **AMEN**.

789 LINGERERS HASTENED – GEN. 19:16

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, January 12th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him out and set him outside the city." — Genesis 19:16

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Psalm 92; Genesis 19:12-30]

EVEN AS LOT LINGERED in Sodom, awakened sinners are apt to tarry long in their sin and unbelief. Some few are suddenly brought to Christ, and, like Saul of Tarsus, within a few hours enjoy complete gospel liberty; but many others are unwise children, and tarry long in the place of danger, loitering where they ought to hasten, and wasting time which they should diligently redeem. It is angelic work to quicken those who linger. The angels who descended to earth in the disguise of wayfarers did not disdain to be employed in such a gracious office, and, if you and I would be like angels, we must do as they did, take procrastinating sinners by the hand, and endeavor to compel them to escape, compelling them to flee from the wrath to come. It is a sign of God's great mercy to any soul when it has an anxious friend to quicken its pace heavenward and Christward. So the text tells us, "The Lord

being merciful unto him." Let no unconverted person think it an annoyance to be rebuked for his sin, or to be frequently exhorted to lay hold on eternal life. It is a great loving-kindness from the Father of mercies to be beset by the persevering earnestness of believing friends. Look upon it in that light, O young man, over whom a mother yearns anxiously; for, if God's long-suffering in bearing with you should lead you to repentance, much more should this kindness in sending you a compassionate friend cause you to yield your heart to Him. Bless God every day for kind-hearted relatives who labor to guide you to the Lord Jesus; you cannot have a greater blessing. I thought, this morning, that perhaps the Lord might make me to some of you an angel of mercy, by enabling me to lead you out of the Sodom of your sins, and to conduct you into a state of present salvation. Oh, how I long for this with eagerness of desire! Happy shall I be if I may win your souls, and, while *you* will rejoice in the mercy given, *I* shall rejoice exceedingly in being the instrument of it by the power of the Spirit.

First, I shall address a few words, this morning, *to God's messengers;* and then, secondly, *to those who linger.*

I. First, I have to speak **TO GOD'S MESSENGERS**. I hope they are very numerous in this church. Every believer should be an ambassador from heaven. "As my Father has sent Me," said the Well- Beloved, "even so send I you." You are sent, my brethren, to gather together the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and, like your Master, to seek and to save that which is lost. I speak solemnly to you who have wept over Jerusalem, and who are proving your true love to souls by your exertions for them, and I remind you, in the first place, that *it is a glorious work to seek to save men, and that for its sake you should be willing to put up with the greatest possible inconveniences.* The angels never hesitated when they were bid to go to Sodom. They descended without hesitation and went about their work without delay.

Although the report of Sodom's detestable iniquity had gone up to heaven, and the Lord would bear no longer with that filthy city, yet, from the purity of heaven, the angels did not hesitate to descend to behold the infamy of Sodom; where God sent them, they failed not to go. Note how the chapter before us begins. I have thought it might be applied to the holy laborers in the dark lanes, and courts, and houses of infamy in this city. "There came two angels to Sodom at even." What? *Angels?* Did angels come to Sodom? To *Sodom*, and yet angels? Yes, and none the less angelic because they came to Sodom, but all the more so, because in unquestioning obedience to their Master's high behests they sought out the elect one and his family, to deliver him and his from impending destruction. However near to Christ you may be, however much your character may be like that of your Lord, you who are called to such service, must never say, "I cannot talk to these people, they are so depraved and debased; I cannot enter that haunt of sin to tell of Jesus; I sicken at the thought; its associations are altogether too revolting to my feelings"; but, because you are there needed, men of God, you must there be found. To whom should the physician go but to the sick, and where can the distributor of the alms of mercy find such a fitting sphere as among those whose spiritual destitution is extreme? Be you angels of mercy each one of you, and God speed you in your soul-saving work. As you have received Christ Jesus into your hearts, so imitate Him in your lives. Let the woman who is a sinner receive your kindness, for Jesus looked on her with mercy; let the man who has been most mad with wickedness be sought after, for Jesus healed demoniacs; let no type of sin, however terrible, be thought by you to be beneath your pity, or beyond your labor, but seek out those who have wandered farthest, and snatch from the flame the firebrands which are already smoking in it.

Note again—I still speak to those who are messengers of God to men's souls—when you go to lost souls, you must, as these angels did, *tell them plainly their condition and their danger*. "Up," they said, "for God will destroy this place." If you really long to save men's souls, you must tell them a great many of disagreeable truths of God; the preaching of the wrath of God has come to be sneered at nowadays, and even good people are half ashamed of it; a mushy sentimentality about love and goodness has hushed, in a great measure, plain gospel expostulations and warnings. But, my brothers, if we expect souls to be saved, we must declare unflinchingly, with all affectionate fidelity, the terrors of the Lord. "Well," said the Scot lad when he listened to the minister who told his congregation that there was no hell, or at any rate only a temporary punishment, "Well," he said, "I need not come and hear this man any longer, for if it is as he says, it is all right, and religion is of no consequence, and if it is not as he says, then I must not hear him again, because he will deceive me." "Therefore," says the apostle, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." Let not modern squeamishness prevent plain speaking concerning everlasting torment. Are we to be gentler than the apostles? Shall we be wiser than the *inspired* preachers of the Word of God? Until we feel our minds overshadowed with the dread thought of the sinner's doom we are not in a fit frame for preaching to the unconverted. We shall never persuade men if we are afraid to speak of the judgment and the condemnation of the unrighteous. There was none as infinitely gracious as our Lord Jesus Christ, yet no preacher ever uttered more faithful words of thunder than He did. It was He who spoke of the place "where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched." It was He who said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." It was He who spoke the parable concerning that man in hell who longed for a drop of

water to cool his tongue. We must be as plain as Christ was, as downright in honesty to the souls of men, or we may be called to account for our treachery at the last. If we flatter our fellows into fond dreams as to the littleness of future punishment, they will eternally detest us for so deluding them, and in the world of woe they will invoke perpetual curses upon us for having prophesied smooth things, and having withheld from them the truth of God.

When we have affectionately and plainly told the sinner that the wages of his sin will be death, and that woe will come upon him because of his unbelief, we must go farther, and must, in the name of our Lord Jesus, *exhort the guilty one to escape from the deserved destruction.* Observe that these angels, though they understood that God had elected Lot to be saved, did not omit a single exhortation or leave the work to itself, as though it were to be done by predestination apart from instrumentality. They said, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters which are here, lest you be consumed." How impressive is each admonition! What force and eagerness of love gleams in each entreaty! "Escape for your life; look not behind you; neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." Every word is quick and powerful, decisive and to the point. Souls need much earnest expostulation and affectionate exhortation, to compel them to escape from their own ruin. Were they wise, the bare information of their danger would be enough, and the prospect of a happy escape would be sufficient; but they, as they are utterly unwise, as you and I know, for we were once such as they are, they must he urged, persuaded, and entreated to look to the Crucified that they may be saved. We would never have come to Christ unless divine constraint had been laid upon us, and neither will they; that Constraint usually comes by instrumentality; let us seek to be such instruments.

If it had not been for earnest voices that spoke to us, and earnest teachers who beckoned us to come to the cross, we would never have come. Let us therefore repay the debt we owe to the church of God, and seek as much as lies in us to do unto others as God in His mercy has done unto us. I beseech you, my brothers, be active to persuade men with all your powers of reasoning and argument, salting the whole with tears of affection. Do not let any doctrinal notions stand in the way of the freest persuading when you are dealing with the minds of men, for sound doctrine is perfectly reconcilable therewith. I remember great complaint being made against a sermon of mine, *"Compel Them to Come In,"* [see Volume V, Sermon #227] in which I spoke with much tenderness for souls. That sermon was said to be Arminian and unsound. brothers and sisters, it is a small matter to be judged of men's judgment, for my Master set His seal on that message; I never preached a sermon by which so many souls were won to God, as our church meetings can testify; and all over the world, where the sermon has been scattered, sinners have been saved through its instrumentality, and, therefore, if it is vile to exhort sinners, I purpose to be viler still. I am as firm a believer in the doctrines of grace as any man living, and a true Calvinist after the order of John Calvin himself; but, if it is thought an evil thing to bid the sinner lay hold on eternal life, I will be yet more evil in this respect, and herein imitate my Lord and His apostles, who, though they taught that salvation is of divine grace, and grace alone, feared not to speak to men as rational beings and responsible agents, and bid them, "strive to enter in at the strait gate," and "labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life." beloved friends, cling to the great truth of electing love and divine sovereignty, but let not this bind you in fetters when, in the power of the Holy Spirit, you become fishers of men.

Learn, still further, from the case before us, that where words suffice not, as they frequently will not, *you must adopt other modes of pressure.* The angel took them by the hand. I have much faith under God in close dealings with men; personal entreaties, by the power of the Holy Spirit, do wonders. To grasp a man's hand while you speak with him may be wise and helpful, for sometimes, if you can get one by the hand and show your anxiety by pleading with him, God will bless it. It is well to cast your words, as men drop pebbles into a well, right down into the depth of the soul, quietly, solemnly, when the man is alone. Often is such a means effectual where the preacher with his sermon has labored in vain. If you cannot win men by words, you must say to yourself, "what can I do?" and go to the Lord with the same inquiry. By the pertinacity of your earnestness, you must trouble them into thoughtfulness. As by continual coming the woman wearied the unjust judge, so you do by your continual anxiety and perseverance weary them in their sins till they will happily give you a little heed in order, if possible, to be rid of you, if for nothing else. If you cannot reach them because they will not read the Bible, yet you can thrust a good book in their way, which may say to them what you cannot say; you can write them a letter, short but earnest, and tell them how you feel; you can continue in prayer for them; you can stir up the arm of God, and beseech the Most High to come to the rescue. There have been cases in which, when everything else has failed, a tear, the tear of disappointed love, has done the work. I think it was Mr. Knill who, one day, when distributing tracts among the soldiers, was met by a man who cursed him, and said to his fellow soldiers, "Make a circle around him, and I will stop his tract distributing once and for all," and then he uttered such fearful oaths and curses that Mr. Knill, who could not escape, burst into a flood of tears. Years afterwards, when he was preaching in the streets, a member of the British

Grenadier Guards came up, and asked, "Mr. Knill, do you know me?" "No, I do not," he said, "I don't know that I ever saw you." "Do you remember the soldier who said, 'Make a circle around him and stop his tract distributing,' and do you remember what you did?" "No, I do not." "Why, you broke into tears, and when I got home those tears melted my heart, for I saw you were so in earnest that I felt ashamed of myself, and now I preach myself that same Jesus whom once I despised." Oh that you might have such a strong love for perishing sinners that you will put up with their rebuffs and rebukes, and say to them, "Strike me if you will, but hear me; ridicule me, but still I will plead with you; cast me under your feet as though I were the offscouring of all things, but at any rate, I will not let you perish, if it is in my power to warn you of your danger."

I thought, as I read my text, that it gave us a striking example of doing all we can. Lot and his wife, and the two daughters—well, that was four—the angels had only four hands, so they did all that they could—there was a hand for each. You notice the text expressly says, they took hold of *the hand* of Lot, and *the hand* of his wife, and *the hand* of his two daughters. There were no more persons, and no more helping hands, so that there was just enough instrumentality, but there was not a hand to spare. I wish there were in this church no idle hands, but that each believer had both hands occupied in leading souls to Jesus Christ. I do not know what more *I* can do. I wish I knew; if there were any possibility of getting at some of you, to bring you to Christ, I would not leave a stone unturned. But I am afraid all our members cannot truthfully say as much as that. Some few can, and I rejoice therein most heartily. I am afraid some of you, although saved yourselves, do but very little for my Lord and Master, and while this great city is perishing, and tens of thousands are going down into the

place where our prayers cannot reach them, and where our tears can be of no help, you let them go as though it were of no consequence; you utter no lamentations, and make no efforts on their behalf. Let our text rebuke you, my fellow laborers, and God give you grace to be more earnest in the future.

Observe, also, that as those angels set us an example in using all their power, so they also encourage us to *perseverance*, for they ceased not to exhort till they had brought Lot out of danger. We must never pause in our efforts for any man till he is either saved or the funeral bell has tolled for him. Even if the last hour is come, and the object of your solicitude is stretched upon the couch which is evidently meant to be his deathbed, still pursue his soul to the very brink of hell. Up to the very gates of perdition hope should track the rebel. When once that iron gate is shut, it is all over with our efforts, but, meanwhile, until then we may entertain hope for any man. You and I have read nowhere concerning such-and-such a man that God will have no mercy on him. We have scanned the rolls of God's decree, and cannot act upon what is not revealed. We have rejoiced to learn that our own names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and yet we were by nature as vile as any; then who shall say that any are too vile? The Lord may have made the worst of men the objects of His electing love. We know that some entered the vineyard at the 11th hour, and why not these? It is a pity that it should have come to the last hour, but still until the sun goes down the Master of the vineyard calls laborers into His service. I pray you, brothers and sisters, faint not in your holy work. Every now and then a lethargy creeps over the Christian church, and a degree of weariness steals over our own souls, but let us arise from such a state. We say, "O Lord, how long? How long?" We think we shall see but little good result of our labor, and we are ready to cast away our

confidence and cease from perseverance. Up, brothers and sisters, up! The devil wearies not; the powers of darkness rest not day nor night; the temptations of this city never know a pause; the dens of infamy and the halls of vice are always enclosing their prey; the lion is lurking everywhere; how then dare we be idle? Oh you who know the power of the Inner life and have tasted that the Lord is gracious, stand fast in what you have received, and press onward towards more exalted holiness. "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

I will say no more to these messengers of God except this, that we ought to remember *that we are the messengers of God's mercy to the sons of men.* The text tells us, "The Lord being merciful unto him." The angels had not come to Lot of themselves; they were the embodiment and outward display of God's mercy. Christians in the world should view themselves as manifestations of God's mercy to sinners, instruments of divine grace, servants of the Holy Spirit. Now, divine mercy is a nimble attribute. Justice lingers; it is shod with lead, but the feet of mercy are winged. Mercy delights to perform its office. So should it be with us a delight to do good to men. God can save men without instruments, but He very seldom does it. His usual rule is to work by means. Oh that the mercy of God would work mightily by us! Let us remember, as we mingle with society, that God has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. If angels were sent upon this ministry, surely they would be incessantly active; they would fly with all their might from place to place to do the Lord's will; shall we who are honored in this be less active than they? As much as lies in us, let us redeem the time because the days are evil; let us be instant in season and out of season, let us sow beside all waters, and let it be our earnest endeavor to make full proof of our

service, whatever that service may be, that at last it may be said, "Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things."

I cannot speak with you as I would, but I feel in my own heart a most solemn earnestness to have all the members of this church engaged in soul-saving work. Beloved, we shall never stop the attacks of Popery, nor stop the advance of Puseyism, nor answer the quibbles of infidelity except by the personal holiness and individual consecration of our church members. In the days immediately before the Reformation, and at the time of the Reformation, God's gospel grew mightily and prevailed, because the believers in the gospel were noticed among their neighbors for the holiness of their lives; they were the most harmless, upright, and generous of men, so that when they were persecuted, their simple neighbors said to one another, "The priests let the lascivious and the debauched escape, but the good, and the honest, and the holy, are taken to the stake, or cast into prison." That was an argument against Popery, of which men's minds perceived the power; and, moreover, it was because every converted person sought to bring in others that the gospel spread. It was thus in the first apostolic fervor. Every man was a missionary, every woman was an evangelist, and so the kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit could not but grow. I want you to conquer this city of London; I want you to subdue this United Kingdom! I labor in prayer to God that this church may be the little handful of corn, the fruit of which shall shake like Lebanon. Not this church alone, but all others too; but as I have specially to deal with you, I want you to be distinguished for your zeal and perseverance in the cause of Christ. It seems to me that if you were what you should be, there is no reason why this dead mass of London should not be made to heave with the power of vital godliness.

Little knots of you might form churches in the localities in which you are living; these would soon increase in membership, and be new centers of usefulness. Some are called to emigrate; we have always considerable streams going from us; some into the country towns of England, some to Australia and New Zealand, and others to the United States; if we were all full of holiness, how might we be like fire brands to set the world on a blaze with the sacred flame of love to Jesus our Lord!

I must now leave my brethren to address myself to the lingering ones, of whom there is a goodly number now present, lingering at the gates of Sodom, unsaved and in danger of destruction.

II. TO YOU, O LINGERERS, I NOW SPEAK, hoping to be the means, by God's grace, of driving you out of this lingering.

I shall begin—O you who are halting between two opinions—by asking you, *Why do you linger?* Lot, I think, loitered because he had much property in and around the city. Probably his flocks and herds were all pastured in the well-watered plain of Sodom. Do you linger because you will lose your gains, because your trade, being an evil one, must be renounced, or because, by following the laws of Christ, you will become a loser in your transactions? My friend, whatever you lose, lose not your soul. "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his life," and the day will come when you will look upon your gold and silver, and all your estate, as worthless in comparison with your soul. Be not foolish, and let not fleeting gain, so soon to disappear, cause you to throw away eternal gain. Perhaps Lot's wife lingered out of natural affection, because she had daughters, and perhaps sons, who were determined not to leave the city. It seems to me very likely that Lot had other daughters beside the two who fled with him, for we are told in the early part of the chapter that those daughters who were with him in the house were not married, and yet this chapter speaks

of sons-in-law. Though this is not certain, yet it is most probable that there were other daughters married to the sons-in-law who mocked; certainly those mentioned who escaped were not married at the time. Did Lot's wife look back because of these daughters whom she could not bear to leave, or was she doting upon those jovial women who had often come gossiping to her house, and at whose house she had been entertained with vicious company? My hearers, is that your case? Would you rather lose your Best friend than all earthly friends? Would you rather be cast out of the circle of society than be cast out of the circle of the glorified spirits? You will find no woman, however enchanting, and no man upon earth, however admirable, to be at all worth the losing of your soul in order to the winning of their company and their esteem. Cut the bond, if it binds you to ruin. Out with the knife and cut off that right arm, or pluck out that right eye, sooner than perish in hell fire.

As to Lot's daughters, I know not why they lingered, but, perhaps there were some very dear to them in the city. Some of you young people may have companions who are ungodly, and you are afraid to leave them. Perhaps the dread of their laugh terrifies you. Oh, but it were better to be laughed at and go to heaven, than to be applauded and cast into the pit of hell. You may be laughed into hell, but you cannot be laughed out of it again. You may cast away your soul to escape ridicule, but by no possibility shall ridicule ever give you back the priceless treasure you have lost. I do beseech you, as men and women who would be wise, and as men and women, who can judge, consider what there can be in this world that can recompense you for the loss of the divine favor, and for being cast away forever and forever from all hope and joy. Why do you linger? If it is for love of sinful company, you linger like madmen. Oh that your madness may be cured in time!

Do you reply that you do not believe in the danger? Then I am indeed sorry for you, for the danger is none the less sure. When men die, they do not die like dogs; they live hereafter. There is a resurrection and a judgment. There is a day appointed in which God will judge the world by the man, Christ Jesus, who will sit upon the great white throne to divide the nations, as the shepherd divided the sheep from the goats. Your doubting it will not make your doom less certain or less severe; believe it. God has revealed it, your conscience justifies it; the most hardened unbelievers have, in the hour of death, as a general rule, given their assent to it, and so, I doubt not, will you. Tremble, you who forget God, for His own words are, "The wicked shall be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God."

Do you linger because you doubt the way of escape? I hope it is not because you do not understand it. If you have attended this house of prayer I am certain that you do understand it, as far as the letter of the gospel can be understood, for I have put it into the most plain words a hundred times, that, "Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved"; that is, whoever *trusts* in what Christ is, and what Christ has done, shall not perish, but have Everlasting life. Do you mistrust this way of escape? Oh that you would have faith in it, for some of us have tried it! Thousands now on earth, and tens of thousands in the skies, have rested upon Christ alone for their salvation, and they have rejoiced in life and in death in finding that there was no condemnation to them! Do not doubt it; it is your only hope.

Or, perhaps, you think that you do not need it. But it is a foolish thought. However excellent you may have been, you must be saved on the same footing as the very worst, for this Book contains only one gospel; it declares that there is only one door to heaven. We are told over and over again, that "no other

foundation can man lay than what is laid." Soul, the Lord Jesus is your only hope. If you do not accept Him, there awaits you nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation. Reject Christ and you reject your soul's only hope; you cast yourself away. You willfully destroy yourself when you reject the gospel of God's dear Son!

It is possible that the reason why you linger is that you indulge some favorite sin. I shall not attempt to guess at what it is. Perhaps it is a secret but shameful lust. You cannot indulge known sin, and yet enter heaven. Well soul, God says to you this morning, "Will you have your sins and go to hell, or will you give them up, and trust in Christ and be saved?" That alternative is put before you. May you have divine grace to make the right choice. But your sin must be given up. I am not here to flatter you, and tell you that you can cheat in business, or indulge in lasciviousness, or live in the neglect of the house of God, or be a drunkard, and yet enter heaven. You cannot have eternal life, and yet fondle these things in your bosom. You cannot be perfect, but you must be willing to be so, and anxious to be so. No sin nurtured in the heart can be compatible within salvation; you must wish to sweep them all away, and in the Holy Spirit's strength. You must *do* it, too, as God shall help you; or else, if you cling to sin, you cling to destruction. Oh, but what sins can be so sweet as to be worth giving up the harps of angels, and worth the endurance of—

"The flames which no abatement know,
Though briny tears forever flow"?

Yet, perhaps, I have not touched the right reason for your lingering. You, perhaps, are subject to an idleness of spirit, a natural inaction and lethargy. I think in most cases this is the root of the matter. You are not stirred up about soul affairs;

you are too idle to come to a decision. But, sirs, you must come to it or die. This stupefying and drugging your conscience, and these excuses and procrastination's will not do; you must come to a decision one way or the other, sooner or later, so why not now? Why, men, you are active enough in business! Are you not pushing your trade, and moving heaven and earth, and rightly enough, to pick up a living for yourselves and your families? And are your souls of such small account and esteem, that you can afford to play over them and trifle? Oh, sirs, have you lost your wits? Has your reason gone out to grass, that you think your immortal and eternal interests to be of so little value that you can sleep over the mouth of hell? Shake yourselves, I pray you, lest you be shaken by the rough hand of death, and lift up your eyes, as the Savior said the rich man did, "in hell, being in torment." Lift up those sluggard eyes now! If ever you were in earnest in your studies or about your business, be in earnest now, I beseech you, about your souls. Prove that you are not fools, but that you have some wits and reason left.

I fear that in some cases, though I know not of many in this place, I fear that this whole matter is despised. I often wonder over some of you; you acknowledge the truth of the Bible, you acknowledge all that is revealed there, and yet you do not repent! I am astonished at you. I can understand the man who says, "I do not believe it"; his remaining unconverted, though a dreadful thing is a consistent thing. There is this to be said for him, he does not absolutely make himself out to be a fool; but you, who say you believe in the Bible, and admit that there is a hell, and a hell for you, you, who believe that there is salvation, and that this may be had by trusting in Christ, and yet do not trust Him, what shall I say *to* you, what shall I say *of* you? I will say this—I would sooner you give up all pretense than waver and halt, and parley with the truth of God to the quenching of the Spirit, and the hardening of your consciences.

I am half inclined to say with stern Elijah, "If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him." If religion is a lie, do not pretend to believe it; say so, and be honest, and take the consequences; but, if it is true, act upon it. If there is a hell, fly from it; if there is a heaven, obtain it; if there is a city of refuge, reach it; if there is a Christ, believe in Him; if He is an impostor, come not here, but reject Him utterly; but, if He is the Savior of sinners, bow down before Him now, I beseech you, lest this be the withering accusation at the last, that you were inconsistent even on your own admissions, and that you went to hell, not simply as sinners, but as fools going willingly to the gallows, knowing where they were going, and yet walking on as bullocks to the slaughter.

Well, I have put the question, Why do you linger? But now I want to say two or three words to you, and they shall be to this effect—*With what shall we hasten you?* These few considerations, hurriedly offered, I hope will not be forgotten. *Time is short.* Young people do not believe this, but you, who have reached 30 or 40 know it. You know how the weeks spin round, how the years fly like wheels that whiz in their hot haste. You know this and feel it, and yet you let these years run on and on. Why do you linger when time flies faster than a thunderbolt and lingers not?

Moreover, *life is uncertain.* Some of you know this by painful experience. You have recently lost friends. Sound, and in strong health, they have been struck down. Others of you have been accustomed to attend the deathbed, or you often see the hearse go by the windows; or you are sick and you carry death in your heart. *Why do you linger?* I feel as if I must stop awhile and weep over your insanity. O friends, if you knew when you were to die, it would be but wise to lay hold on Christ now; but, since you do not know but what in this very house you may become corpses, will you run the risks of hell and eternal wrath? I pray

you do not do so for your own sake, for it is your business more than mine; for your own sakes be wise and linger no longer.

If this will not quicken you, let me tell you, that *if you were now to believe in Christ you would be no loser.* Present salvation would be present happiness! Trusting in Christ at this moment, would give you—I speak from experience—a joy which nothing in the world can rival!

Besides that, *you are now, at this moment, in danger.* Have you never read such texts as these, "He who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"? "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked"? "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turns not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow, and made it ready"? Do not think I speak these terrible things because I like to speak them; no, but because I would have you saved. I cannot bear to think of your being lost, though you can. I cannot bear to think that I should have looked into the faces of some of you so many months, and even years, and yet should have to appear a swift witness against you in the Day of Judgment. Shall I not be compelled to say, "These people did know the gospel, and did in a measure feel its power, but they said, 'Not now, not now; when I have a more convenient season, I will send for you.'" *And it is so simple:* it is but to believe and live, to trust and to be saved. O that now Christ would cast the weight of His love into the scale that you might once and for all give up yourself for Him!

There is one terrible reflection which I cannot help mentioning, namely, that *with some of you it ought to be an alarming fact, that the means of grace are losing effect.* You used to feel them much more than you do now. Why, when you first came to the Surrey Music Hall, or to the Tabernacle, if the preacher seemed at all in earnest, you wept. Sometimes you could not sleep at night because of the alarm that was caused you, but I may ring

the alarm bell now, again and again before it will awaken you. To you my voice has lost its striking note; you are used to the sound of my entreaties. Oh that I could awaken you! May I sleep in the grave before I become a mere machine to lull you to sleep; I do strive to get variety in my ministry, because I know that without it I cannot get your attention and reach your hearts. Ah, thoughtless hearer, you had better go somewhere else! There may be a chance of somebody else getting at your heart, but I am afraid I shall not. If you do not repent under my ministry, go somewhere else. Do not lose the chance that perhaps there may be somebody else who will be more plain and more earnest with you than I am; do not let it be the sad case that you shall sit here till you shall nod yourselves unto destruction, slumbering under the sound of the gospel, and then sinking into hell, hopelessly and without excuse.

This is the last reflection I shall offer you. Within a few short months, or say within a few short years at the very outside, you will know one of two things—you will know either the terrors of hell or the glories of heaven. Now, which shall it be? All this hinges upon your believing or not believing in the Lord Jesus. If you believe, your portion shall be with the white-robed throng whose life is bliss, whose existence is immortality. If you believe, all the splendors of heaven shall be yours with Christ in whom you have trusted. But if you believe not, as truly as God is God, and that this Book is true—and, if you deny God and this Book, then I must deal with you another time—if these things are not a fable, then you, even you, a child of a godly mother, even you, a hearer at the Tabernacle, you must be bound up with bundles of sinners to be burned you must hear the voice, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels," and in that day, in that day, do me at least this one act of justice— acknowledge that I did warn you of it, that I did seek to stop you if I could, even

to laying violent hands upon you, if possible, to turn you from your evil ways! But oh, it must not be so; I cannot bear it. I cannot close without having said to you what God Himself has said, "Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?" "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Come unto Christ, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him who hears say, Come. And let him who is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

790 KING'S GARDENS – NEH. 3:15

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Dec. 29th, 1867,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"The King's garden." — Nehemiah 3:15

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Genesis 2; Matthew 26:36-46]

THERE HAVE BEEN many very famous king's gardens, such as those "hanging gardens" in Nineveh, in which Sardanapalus delighted himself, and that remarkable garden of Cyrus, in which he took such great interest, because, as he said, every tree and every plant in it had been both planted and tended by his own royal hand. Imagination might bid you wander among the beauties of the celebrated villas and gardens of the Roman emperors, or make you linger amid the roses and lilies of the voluptuous gardens of the Persian caliphs, but we have nobler work in hand. I call you to come with me to orchards of pomegranates, to beds of spices, camphor with spikenard, calamus and cinnamon, myrrh and aloes, and trees of frankincense. I am not about to speak of the gardens of any earthly monarch, for we can find far fairer flowers and rarer fruits in the gardens of the King of kings, the resorts of His Son, the Prince Immanuel.

There are six of these "king's gardens" to which I shall conduct you, but we shall not have time to tarry in more than one of them.

I. The first of these king's gardens was **THE GARDEN OF PARADISE**, which was situated in the midst of Eden.

You will read of it in the Book of Genesis. It was doubtless a fairer place than we have ever seen, and much more marvelous for beauty than we can imagine. It was full of all manner of delights, a fruitful spot in which the man who was set to keep it would have no need to toil, but would find it a happy and refreshing exercise to train the luxurious plants. No sweat was ever seen upon his happy brow, for he cultivated a virgin soil. Abundance of luscious fruits ministered to his necessities. He could stretch himself upon soft couches of moss, and no inclement weather disturbed his repose. No winter's wind scattered the leaves of Eden, no summer's heat burned up its flowers. There were sweet alternations of day and night, but the day brought no sorrow and the night no danger. The beasts were there; yet not as beasts of prey, but as the obedient servants of that happy man whom God had made to have dominion over all the works of His hands. In the midst of the garden grew that mysterious tree of life, of which we know so little literally, but of which, I trust, we know much in its spiritual meaning, for we have fed upon its fruits, and have been healed by its leaves. Hard by it stood the tree of knowledge of good and evil, placed there as the test of obedience. Adam's mind was equally balanced, it had no bias to evil, and God left him to the freedom of his will, giving this as the test of his loyalty, that, if obedient, he would never touch the fruit of that one tree. Why need he? There were tens of thousands of trees, all of which bowed down their branches with abundant fruit for his hunger or his luxury. Why need he desire that solitary tree which God had fenced and hedged

about? But, in an evil hour, at the serpent's base suggestion, we know not how soon after his creation, he put forth his hand and plucked from the forbidden tree! The mere plucking of the fruit seems little to the thoughtless, but the breaking of the Maker's law was a great offense to heaven, for it was man's throwing down the glove of battle against his Creator, and breaking his allegiance to his Lord and Master; this was great, great in itself and in its mischievous effects, for Adam fell that day, and he was driven out of Eden to till the thankless, thorn-bearing soil, and you and I fell in him, and were banished with him. We were in his loins. He was "the father of us all," and on us he has brought the curse of toil, and in us all he has sown the seeds of iniquity. Let it never be forgotten, in connection with the garden of Eden, that we are not now a pure and sinless race, and cannot be by nature, however civilized we may become. Men are born no longer with balanced minds, but a heavy weight of original sin in the scale. We are averse to that which is good. The bias of the mind of man, when he is born into the world, is towards that which is evil, and we as naturally go astray as the serpent naturally learns to hiss, or the wolf to tear and to devour.

Ah, brothers and sisters, beware of thinking too little of the fall! Slight thoughts upon the fall are at the root of false theologies; the mischief that has been worked in us is not a trifling matter, but a thing to be trembled at. Only the divine hand can reclaim us. The house of manhood has been shaken to its foundations; each timber is decayed; leprosy is in the tottering wall. Man must be made new by the same creating hand that first made him, or he never can be a dwelling place fit for God. Let those who boast of their natural goodness look to the garden of Eden and be ashamed of their pride, and then examine their own actions by the glass of God's most holy law, and be confounded that they should dream of purity. How can

he be pure who is born of woman? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing? Not one." As our mothers were sinful, such are we and such will our children be; as long as men are brought into the world by natural generation, we shall be "born in sin and shaped in iniquity;" and if we are to be accepted by God, we must be born-again and made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Alas, then, alas, for that first king's garden! The flowers are gone; the birds have ceased to sing! The winter's winds howl through it, and the summer's sun scorches it! The beasts of prey are there. Perhaps the very site of it, which is now unknown, may be a den of dragons, an habitation for the pelican of the wilderness, and the bittern of desolation! Fit image, if it is so, of our natural estate, for we were altogether given up to desolation and destruction, unless one mighty to save has espoused our cause and undertaken our redemption.

II. The second king's garden to which I will introduce you is very different from the first, but it yields more fragrant spices and healthier herbs by far. It is **THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE**—the garden of the olive press, in which the Lord Jesus Christ was the olive, and God's anger against sin was the press.

Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground! 'Tis night. Yonder are 12 men walking, and talking sweetly as they walk. Observe one, a mysterious, majestic person, who is evidently superior to the rest. It is the Son of Man. Hush! It is the Son of God, and as He talks you can hear words like these, "I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in Me and I in you." We will conceal ourselves behind that group of olive trees, and will see what is to happen here. This is the place where that mysterious Son of God was often to be found with His disciples. Just as God walked in the first garden in Eden, so the Son of God walked in the second garden; and as

God in the first garden communed with man, so of the second garden it is written Jesus oftentimes resorted there with His disciples. Look, He has dismissed eight of them. He has told them to wait yonder, and on He goes with only three—Peter, and James, and John—the chosen out of the 11—and speaking to them, and bidding them watch, He leaves them, and is all alone. Let us draw as near as we may; we see the Son of God in prayer, and as He prays, His earnestness gathers strength. He is striving with an unseen enemy—struggling like a man who would overcome an adversary, wrestling so vigorously that He sweats; but it is a strange sweat! "His sweat was, as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." He is beginning to drink the cup of Jehovah's wrath, which was due to our sins, a cup which we could not have emptied even through eternity, though every drop of it had been a hell. Christ is downing the wrath-cup, and as He trembles under the fiery influence of the draught of worse than wormwood and gall, He cries, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." But He recovers Himself, and His prayer is, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Backwards and forwards you see Him go like a man distracted. Three times He looks to the disciples for comfort, but they are slumbering, and then again He returns to His God and casts Himself upon His face, with strong crying and tears, pouring out His soul in blood before high heaven—such is the anguish of His tortured heart.

Behold here the beginning of our *redemption*. Jesus then began to suffer in our place, atoning for our iniquity. The mischief of Eden fell upon Gethsemane. The mist of sin rose up in the garden of Paradise, and as it rose it gathered and collected into a black, tremendous storm cloud, and then it burst, with flashes of lightning and with claps of thunder, upon the Great Shepherd of the sheep, that we, who deserved to be

overwhelmed by the tempest, might find fair weather in the rest which remains for the people of God.

Perhaps no sight that was ever beheld of men or angels, except the crucifixion, was more tremendous than the agony of Gethsemane. It must have been a terrible spectacle to have seen martyrs in the fire, or men and women devoured by lions and bears in the Roman amphitheatre, but then to the Christian's eyes there was a pleasure mingled with these ghastly sights, for God sustained His faithful ones. They clapped their hands amidst the fire. They sang when the wild beasts were leaping upon them. Such holy joy beamed from their countenances that their brothers and sisters were comforted rather than distressed, and saints wished to be there with them, that they might die as they died and win the martyr's crown. But, when you look at Christ in the garden, you miss the help which the martyrs had. God forsakes Him. He must tread the winepress alone, and of the people there must be none with Him. Yes, and yet, dark as that night was, the darkest night that ever fell upon this world, it was the mother of that gospel light of finished redemption which now enlightens the Gentiles and brings glory unto Israel.

Let us leave the king's garden, then, with feelings of deep repentance that we should have made Jesus suffer so, and yet with holy gladness to think that thus has He redeemed us from the ruins of the fall.

III. I claim a moment's thought for the **GARDEN OF THE BURIAL AND THE RESURRECTION**.

In Joseph's garden, in the new tomb, the Beloved of our souls slept for a while, and then arose to His glory-life. Detained of death He could not be, for He was no longer a lawful Captive, He had finished His work, and earned His reward, and therefore the imprisoning stone was rolled away. He is not here, for He is risen; the seal is broken, the watchmen are dispersed, the stone is removed, the Captive is free. What

comfort is here, for, as Jesus rose, so all His slumbering saints shall likewise leave the tomb. His resurrection is the resurrection of all the saints. Wait but a while, and the tomb shall be no longer the treasury of death. As surely as the Lord came forth from the sepulcher to glory and immortality, all His saints are justified and clean. None can accuse us now that the Lord has risen indeed no more to die. His one offering has perfected forever all the chosen ones, and His glorious resurrection is the guarantee of their acceptance. Faith delights in the garden where Magdalene found her unknown, yet well-known, Lord, and where angels kept watch and ward over the couch which the immortal Sufferer had relinquished. Henceforth it is to us a king's garden, abounding with pleasant fruits and fragrant flowers.

IV. And now I desire to take you to a fourth king's garden. You will not have far to go. Put your hand on your bosom and your finger will be on the latch of its door. It is **THE GARDEN OF THE HUMAN HEART**.

The heart is a little garden, little apparently, but yet so extensive that it is all but infinite, for who can tell the limit of the heart of man, or how far-darting the imaginations and the affections of the soul of man may be? Now, this little-great thing, the human heart, is meant to be a garden for God. Did I say it was a garden? It should be so, but alas, by nature it scarcely deserves the name, for I perceive it to be all overgrown with weeds: thistle and briar, deadly nightshade, and nettles, and I know not what besides, spring up everywhere. I see trees, but they drop with poison, like the deadly upas, whose drip is death. There are no luscious fruits, but instead the grapes of Gomorrah and apples of Sodom: this loathsome den of festering evils is what should have been God's garden, but it is a tangled wilderness of all manner of noxious things; thorns, also, and thistles does it bring forth.

What must be done to this neglected garden? What heavenly horticulture can be used upon it to reclaim it from its desert state? God, the great Farmer, must come and turn it over after His own fashion. The rough plow of conviction must be dragged through it. The spade of trouble must break up the surface and smash to pieces the clods, and kill the weeds, and fire must burn up the rubbish. Has that ever been done in the garden of your heart, dear hearer? Have you ever had your soul plowed and cross-plowed and harrowed with sorrow till you were driven well-near to despair? Have you seen your sweet sins killed, so that you could not take pleasure in them any longer, but desired to be clean rid of them? That must be done if the garden is to be reclaimed and made worthy of the divine owner.

Then when the soil is broken up, and the clods are turned, there must be seed sown, and the planting of slips from the tree of life, seeds from the nurseries of heaven, seeds that shall turn to flowers which shall be full of sweet perfume, acceptable to Christ. The seeds of faith, love, hope, patience, perseverance, and zeal must be carefully cast into prepared soil by the Holy Spirit's hand, and fostered by the same kindly care. Before the heart can be called a garden fit for the King of kings, these must bud, and blossom, and yield their fruits. When I attentively regard that garden which was so lately covered over with weeds, but which is now sown and planted, I perceive that the plants grow not well unless the soil is drained. There must be always drained out of us much superfluity of evil and excess of carnal confidence, or our heart will be a cold swamp—a worthless plant-killing bog. Affliction drains us. We do not like to have our money or our friends taken from us, and yet the love of these might ruin us for all fruit-bearing if God did not remove them. Besides the draining, there must also be constant hoeing, and raking and digging. After a garden is made, the beds are

never left long alone, the gardener must have his eye upon them or they run to riot. If they were left to themselves, they would soon breed weeds again and return to the old confusion, so the hoe must be constantly kept going, if the garden is to he clean. So with the garden of the heart: cleansing and pruning must be done every day, and God must do it through ourselves, and we must do it by constant self-examination and repentance, striving in the power of the Holy Spirit to keep ourselves free from the sins which do so easily beset us. I find that the weeds grow fast enough in my soul, and keep me in full employment to check their growth. Cowper talks about—

"The dear hour which brought me to Your foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root."

Surely, good Cowper must have made a mistake! I know mine were never cut up by the roots. When they have been cut down, the root soon sprouts again. They will be cut up by the root one day, as I believe and hope, but till then I must be incessantly watchful; but the roots are still there; alas! Alas! Alas, that it should be so! O Lord Jesus, help us, or we shall be overgrown with our besetting sins. Corruption still remains even in the heart of the regenerate, and the garden of the King of kings is often overgrown with weeds. But for God it is still a garden—a garden for Jesus to walk in, and there are happy times when He deigns to sit down in the arbor of our souls! What a royal garden our poor heart then becomes! It may be the body is covered with poor garments, it may be our whole outward man is very sick and faint, but still our manhood is a King's garden when Christ is within, and we are kings and priests unto our God when Jesus holds fellowship with us, The angels come into that garden, too, and when the air is still, and the noise of outside cares is hushed, we have often enjoyed a

little heaven within our heart, the beginning of the heaven to which we hope soon to go. Dear hearer, do you know what we mean by paradise within, glory beaming in the heart, heaven in the soul? Jesus can teach you this.

The heart is a King's garden, beloved. Jesus bought it with His precious blood, and He has now by His grace come into it and claimed it to be His own. My friend, if He has not come to you yet, I hope He will. If you have not given your heart to Him, I hope you may be led to do so by His gracious Spirit. But, if your heart is His, oh, keep it for your Beloved! Do not give the keys to anyone else. The love of husband, wife and child, each of these is to have its proper place, but the heart's core is the King's garden. Mark you, it is not the husband's garden, nor the wife's garden, nor the child's garden; the dearest idols we have known must not be set up there; it is the King's garden. I hope you will say tonight, before you go to rest, "O King, come into my garden, and eat my pleasant fruit! Awake, O heavenly wind, and blow upon the garden of my soul, and let all the plants of my new nature give forth their sweetness, that my Beloved may be charmed with my company, and that I may be filled with His sweet love."

V. However, I want you to spend most of your time in a fifth garden, and that is **THE GARDEN OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**—*our* garden, and yet the King's garden, planted and flourishing in this place.

Follow me in each word of the text. What is it? *A garden.* The church of God is a garden. Many thoughts are gathered in that one metaphor like bees in a hive. It is called a garden in the book of Solomon's Song, so I know that we are not wrong in using the illustration. But what does a garden mean?

In the first place it implies *separation.* A garden is not the open waste, the shrubs, or the common; it is not a wilderness; it is walled around; it is hedged in. Ah, Christian, when you join

the church, remember you, too, become by profession hedged in for King Jesus. I earnestly desire to see the wall of separation between the church and the world made broader and stronger. Believe me, nothing gives me more sorrow than when I hear of church members saying, "Well, there is no harm in this; there is no harm in that," and getting as near to the world as possible. It does not matter what you may think of it, but I am certain that divine grace is at low ebb in your soul when you even raise the question of how far you may go in worldly conformity. We are to avoid the very appearance of evil, and especially just at this festive season of the year, this Christmas, when so many of you are having your parties, your children's sports, and all that kind of thing. I would have you doubly jealous, do remember, church members that you are to be Christians always, if Christians at all; we do not grant dispensations to sin, as the Roman Catholics did in Luther's day. You are always to wear your uniforms as Christian soldiers, and never, at any time, to say, "Well, I shall do this just now; it is only once a year; I shall do as the world does; I cannot be out of fashion." You must be either out of the fashion, or out of the true church; remember that, because the place for Christ's church is altogether out of fashion. You are called to go forth outside the camp, bearing His reproach. If you want to be in the camp, you cannot be Christ's disciple, for the love of the world is enmity to Christ. You *must* be a separated one or be lost. If you want to be the common, you cannot be the garden; and if you are willing and anxious to be the garden, why, then, do not attempt to be the common. Keep the hedges up; keep the gates well bolted—King's gardens must not be left open to thieves and robbers. Be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The King's garden is a separated place—keep it so.

The King's garden is *a place of order.* You do not, when you go into your garden, find the flowers all put in any which way, but the wise gardener arranges them according to their tints and hues, so that in the midst of summer the garden shall look like a rainbow that has been broken to pieces and let down upon the earth, delightful to gaze upon. All the walks are even, the beds are in proportion, and the plants well arranged, just as they should be. Such should the Christian church be—pastor, deacons, elders, members, all in their proper places. We are not a load of bricks, but a house. The church is not a mere heap, but it is to be a palace built for God, a temple in which He manifests Himself. Let us all try to maintain order in the household of Christ, and above all things hate discord and confusion. Let us be men who know how to keep rank, maintaining a decent order and regularity in all things. We seek not the order which consists in all sleeping in their places, like corpses in the catacombs, but we desire the order which finds all working in their places for the common cause of the Lord Jesus. May we never become a disorderly, disunited, irregular church; may there be order in the garden preserved by the power of love and divine grace.

A garden is *a place of beauty,* and such should the Christian church be. You gather together the fairest flowers from all lands, and put them in your garden, and if you see no beauties in the streets, you expect to see them in the florist's beds. So, if there is no holiness, no love, no zeal, no prayerfulness outside in the world, yet we should see these things in the church. We are not to take the world to be our guide, but we are to excel it. We must do more than others. The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that *their* righteousness *must* exceed that of even the Scribes and Pharisees, or they could not enter the kingdom of God; and the genuine Christian must seek to be more excellent in his life than the best moralist, because Christ's garden ought

to have the best flowers in the world. Even the best is poor compared with what Christ's deserves, let us not put Him off with withered and dying plants. The rarest, richest, choicest lilies and roses ought to bloom in the place which Jesus calls His own!

The King's garden is *a place of growth,* too. I do not suppose the florist would think that soil fit to be a garden in which his plants would not grow. It would be a dead loss to him if the slips remained slips, and if the buds never turned to flowers, and so in the church of God. We are not introduced into fellowship to be always the same, always little children and babes in grace. We should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The prayer meeting should be a school of practical education for our beloved young members, a place for the young nestlings to try their callous wings. When they try to pray, at first they may almost break down, perhaps, but if they will not give way to a foolish timidity, they will soon get over it, and find themselves useful, not merely in public prayer, but in a thousand works of usefulness besides. Growth should be rapid where Jesus is the gardener, and the Holy Spirit the dew from above.

Again, a garden is *a place of retirement.* When a man is in his garden, he does not expect to see all his customers walking down between the beds to do business with him. "No," he says, "I am walking in my garden, and I expect to be alone." So the Lord Jesus Christ would have us reserve the church to be a place in which He can manifest Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Oh, I wish that Christians were more retired, that they kept their hearts more shut up for Christ! I am afraid we often worry and trouble ourselves, like Martha, with much serving, so that we have not the room for Christ that Mary had, and do not sit at His feet as we ought to do. The Lord grant us grace to keep our hearts as closed gardens for Christ to walk in.

This, then, is a poor description of what the church is; and now, very briefly, *whose is it?*

The church is a garden, but it is *the King's* garden. The church is not mine, nor yours, but the King's. It is the King's garden because He chose it for Himself—

"We are a garden walled around,
Chosen, and made peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

We are the King's because He bought us. Naboth said he would not give up his vineyard because he inherited it. So does Christ inherit us by an indefeasible title. We are His heritage, and He has so dearly bought us with His own blood that He will never give us up, blessed be His name! We are His, because He has conquered us. He won us in fair fight, and now we acknowledge the validity of His title-deeds, and confess, every one of us, as the members of His church, that we are His, and that He is ours.

What a nobility this gives to Christ's church! I have sometimes heard people talk disparagingly of church meetings; there may be but few persons present, some of those may be young members, some may be very old, yet I have been much grieved when I have heard people despise such a church meeting, for Christ would not despise it. Let such beware. Whenever the church meets, either as a whole or representatively, there is a solemn dignity cast about that assembly which is not to be found in a parliament of kings and princes. Yes, I will say it—if Louis Napoleon could call a senate of all the potentates in this world in Paris, and hold a congress there, the whole of them put together would not be worth the snap of a finger compared with half-a-dozen godly old women

who meet together in the name of Christ as a church, in obedience to the Lord's command; for God would not be there with the potentates—what cares He for them? But He would be with the most poor and despised of His people who meet together as a church in Jesus Christ's name. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," is more glorious than ermine, or purple, or crown. Constitute a church in the name of Christ, and meet together as such, and there is no assembly upon the face of the earth that can be compared with it, and even the assembly of the first-born in heaven is but a branch of the grand whole of which the assemblies of the church on earth make up an essential part. The church is *the King's* garden.

I am going to ask, now, if the church is a garden, *what does it need?*

One thing it certainly requires is *labor*. You cannot keep a garden in proper order without work. We need more laborers in this church, especially of one sort. We need some who will be *planters*. I had a letter last week from a young woman; I do not know who she is; I do not know where she sits; it may be in the top gallery, it is quite as likely to be in the second—perhaps more likely; and in the arena, quite as likely again. She says that she has been here for two years; that she has been very anxious about her soul, and she has often wished that somebody would speak to her, but nobody has done so. Now, if I knew where she sat, I would say to the friends who sit there, that I am ashamed of them! As I do not know where she sits, will those of you who love Christ, but who have not been in the habit of looking after others, be so kind as to be ashamed of yourselves, because there is somebody or other to be blamed in this business. If you love Jesus at all, I cannot understand how you can let a person come to this Tabernacle for two years and not speak to them. Somebody has been negligent, very negligent; whoever it may be, let him see to it. I do not say you

can speak upon the best things the first time you see them, though you might try to do that at any rate; but how can you have been silent for two years? How can this be? You have been here twice every Sunday, and that young woman has been here twice; well, there are 200 times—200 opportunities that you have lost; 200 times that you have let that poor soul go away burdened without speaking to her! I need laborers very badly, real hard-working soul-winners. I need planters who can get the young slips and put them where they will grow. I need helpers who will gather up the young lambs, just as they are born, and carry them in their bosom a little while; spiritual nurses who will give comfort to the broken-hearted, and pour in the oil of consolation into the wounds of poor trembling sinners.

In every church there ought to be some *to watch over those who are planted.* When we receive members we ought to look after them, and as one person cannot do it thoroughly, as even the elders and deacons are hardly numerous enough for so great a work, it should be the aim and duty of all the experienced Christians in the church to fondly tend the younger ones. I believe that many of you do this, and I am very thankful to zealous friends who are not in office in the church, but who do a great deal in visiting the sick and watching over the younger members. Only I want *all of you* to do it! Oh, if everybody were duly anxious about keeping this garden in order, how beautifully trimmed all the borders would be, and how few weeds should we find springing up in the beds! May I ask you, members of the church, are you doing your duty by the King's garden? You are yourselves His own chosen ones and He has worked for you so that you have no need to work to save yourselves; but still, you must not be idle, for your Lord has said to you, "Go, work today in My vineyard." Are you doing it? I thank you if you are. If you are not, blame yourselves.

There should be a little band in every church *to collect the stragglers.* Our vines will grow out of order if they can, but we must deal wisely with them, and fasten them up in their places. We must be on the alert when we see backsliding begin. How much can be done by old Christians in trying to stop backsliding among the young! I believe that half the cases that have gone badly might have been stopped by a little judicious forethought, if Believers had taken them in time. I say again, what can we, who are the officers of this church, do with so many? Why, we number more than 3,500 in church fellowship. But if you will look after each other, and seek wherever you see a little decline or a little coldness, to bring the brother or sister back, the King's garden will be well cared for. The King's garden needs laborers; may you all labor, and its needs in this respect will be met.

Sometimes we need, brothers and sisters, *to burn up the rubbish and sweep up the leaves.* In the best church there will always be some falling leaves. Somebody gets out of wack with another brother. We are not any of us perfect. We get on far more than reasonably well with one another, as a church. I never saw any church that was really so well knit together in Christian love as we are; but there are always a few leaves about, and not a little dust to be put in the corner and burned. May I ask a brother, whenever he sees any mischief, to sweep it up and say nothing about it? Whenever you find that such-and-such a brother is going a little amiss, talk to him about it quietly; do not spread it all over the church and cause jealousies and suspicions. Pick up the leaf and destroy it! When a brother member has offended you, so that you feel vexed, forgive him; for I dare say *you* will need forgiveness before many days are over! We have none of us, perhaps, the sweetest of tempers, but, if we do have the sweetest, the way to prove it is by forgiving those who have not. If every one would seek to make

peace, there never could be any great accumulation of discord in the King's garden to annoy Him; but when He came walking in He would find it all beautiful and in good order, and all the flowers blooming delightfully and He would find His delights with the sons of men.

Now, I have said that the church needs laborers, but, dear friends, it needs something else. *It needs new plants.* I wish I might find some tonight. Our King finds plants for His garden outside the wall. He takes the wild olive branches, and grafts them into the good olive, and then the sap changes the nature. A new thing that! It is not thus in our gardens at home, but wonders are worked in the garden of the King! He transplants weeds from the dunghill, and makes them to grow as lilies in the midst of his fair garden. Will you be such a plant? May the Master's love compel you to desire to be such a one, and, if you desire it, you shall have it. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are His. Rest alone upon Him and you are a plant of His right-hand planting, and shall never be rooted up. God grant that you may blossom to the skies!

But, dear friends, all the laborers and all the new plants would not be what the church requires if she had not something else, for every garden needs *rain*, and every garden needs *sunshine*. This church, if it had ever so many laborers, could never prosper without the dew of the Holy Spirit and the sunshine of the divine favor. We have had these blessings to a very great extent. We must pray that we may have more. I should like to know of some of you, how long it is since you have been to a prayer meeting. Shall I stop and let you count? Well, you have not been just lately, because it is Christmas time. Very well, I did not expect to see you; and if I had expected, I would have been disappointed. But it was not Christmas time last October, and yet you were not here then. Some of you very seldom come at all. If you are lawfully detained at home, I

would never ask you to come, or upbraid you for minding your home duties, for you have no right to leave legitimate business that ought to be done to come here. But I am certain that some of you are idle, and might come if you liked. I pray the Lord to send you a horsewhip in the shape of trouble in your conscience till you do come, for it very much weakens us all in our prayers when our numbers decline; and whenever people come to despise weeknight services, be sure of it, farewell to the vital power of godliness, for weeknight services are very, very much the stamp of the man. Any hypocrite will come on a Sunday, but a man does need to take some interest in religious services to be found mingling with the people of God in prayer. Am I to believe that some of you do not care whether souls are saved or not? Am I to believe that some of you, our church members, have no care whether our ministry is blessed or not? Am I to believe that you continue members of a church in which you take no interest? Am I to believe that it is nothing to you whether Christ is crowned or despised? I will not believe it, and yet your absence from the prayer meetings tends to make me fear that it must be so. I beg you correct yourselves in this matter, and as the King's garden needs rain and sunshine, and we cannot expect to have it without prayer, let us not forget the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is. Oh, for more prayer, more to pray, and for those who do pray, to pray with more fervor and more constancy in supplication! One favor I would ask. If you cannot come to the prayer meetings—and many of you, I know, cannot, and I do not speak to you, blaming you—but do pray in the family, do pray in the closet for us. Do not let us become poor in prayer. It is a bad thing to become poor in money, because we need it for a thousand causes, and cannot get on without it. But we can do without money better than we can do without prayer. We *must* have your prayers. I had almost said, if you do not give us your daily

prayers give up your membership, for it is no good to yourselves, and cannot be of any use to us. The very least thing that a church member can do is to plead with God that the blessing may descend. It is the King's garden, and will you not pray for it? It is the King's own garden in which He loves to walk, and which He has purchased with His blood; shall not your prayers go up that His church may flourish, and that His kingdom may come?

And now, lastly, on this point. This King's garden, *what does it produce?* If there had been time, I meant to have waited while you answered the question as to how much *you* produced. Sometimes in our garden we have a tree which is so loaded with fruit that we have to put props under it to keep the branches from breaking; there are one or two in this church of that sort, who bear much fruit for God, and are so weak in body that their very fruitfulness of zeal and earnestness seems as though it would break them. I pray God that with His gracious promise He may prop them up. I am afraid that this is not the picture of most of us. You say to the gardener sometimes, "Will there be any fruit on that tree this season? It is time that it should show." He looks, and looks, and looks again, and at last the good man says, "I think I can see one little one up at the top, sir, but I do not know whether it will come to much." That, I am afraid, is the picture of many professors. There is fruit, or else they would not be saved ones, but it is "a little one." "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples." May your prayer be, not for fruit only, but for much fruit, and may God send it! Remember, if there is any fruit at all, it all belongs to the King. If a soul is saved, *He* shall have the glory for it. If there is any advance made in the great cause of truth and righteousness, the crown shall be put upon His head. The keepers of the vineyard shall

have their hundreds, but the King Himself shall have His 10,000s time 10,000s, for He deserves it all.

VI. And now, dear friends, before I send you away, there is one more garden I must mention, but the time is so far past that I shall not keep you to say much about it; it is the **GARDEN OF THE PARADISE ABOVE**. I shall let God's word speak to you about that garden, and then I have done. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bore 12 manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign forever and ever."

In that garden of the paradise above may we all be found at the last. Amen.

791 THE ARROWS OF THE BOW BROKEN IN ZION – PS. 76:3

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, January 19th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield and sword of battle." — Psalm 76:3

THE WRITER OF THIS SONG of triumph gloried as a patriot in the defeat of his country's foes: he did better, he triumphed as a believer in Jehovah in the victories which were worked by the power of the Lord his God. I have sometimes wished that we English Christians blended in ourselves a little more of the two characters of patriots and believers. I am persuaded that if our poets had been holy and devout men, and at the same time bold patriots, like David, they would not have lacked subjects for the most glorious national hymns. The events of English history are no less stirring than the annals of Judah and Israel. What a theme for a master singer would be the defeat of the proud Spanish Armada, or the frustration of Rome's knavish tricks on November the Fifth, or the gallant fights of Oliver and his valiant Ironsides, or the landing of William III, and the overthrow of the hopes of the enemies of the gospel! Our national minstrelsy has never been as devout as it should be, and we are poor in holy national songs as compared to the Hebrews; may the taste of coming ages improve in this respect.

Let us, in the events which occur in our own time, see the hand of God, and if we cannot write psalms and hymns, yet at any rate let us feel the spirit of glowing thanksgiving to that God who has bid the ocean gird our native isle, and thus protected her with a better guard than gates of brass or triple steel. Blessed be the Lord our God, who till now has held the shield of omnipotence over this land, and made it the citadel of liberty, the refuge of the oppressed, and the stronghold of the gospel of Christ.

We will not, however, detain you with such subjects, but invite you to more spiritual considerations. Our Salem is the peaceful church or God, and our Zion is the abode of gospel worship, where the general assembly of the first-born unite in holy joy.

The psalmists of Israel, when they rehearsed the Lord's mighty acts in the midst of His people, spoke of the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea; and we who believe in Jesus can join with the song of Moses the song of the Lamb, while we behold the overthrow of sin, death, and hell, by our all-glorious Champion, and cry with all our hearts and voices, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." Israel chanted her praises of victory over the accursed Canaanites whom Joshua slew with great slaughter. They were firmly established in their own country, they dwelt in cities which were walled up to the heavens, and they rushed forth to war, riding in chariots of iron, with sharp scythes upon their axles, and spearmen darting their javelins afar. Their warriors were swift and valiant, and their numbers like the sand of the sea, but, behold, their boasted armies dissolved at the advance of Joshua as the hoar frost melts in the sun! Hittites and Amorites, Hivites and Jebusites fell before the sword of the Lord, and Israel magnified Jehovah who "smote great kings, and slew famous kings, and gave their

land for an heritage, even an heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever." We also have a better Canaan in prospect, and more terrible enemies have been subdued by Jesus, the Captain of our salvation; let us not be slow to praise the name of the Lord. No Jew could forget the victories achieved under the leadership of David over the Philistines. They had giants among them, and their ranks were filled with veterans, men of war from their youth up, yet the sling and the stone brought down the champion, and the troops of God were made valiant in battle, turning to flight the armies of the aliens! Give unto the Lord, O you mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name, for even thus has Jesus vanquished evil, and given His servants grace to conquer through His blood. This Psalm commemorates the grand defeat of Sennacherib, when no swords or spears were used, but the Lord sent an angel who cut off all the mighty men of valor, and all the leaders and captains in the camp, so that the proud Assyrian returned with shame to his own land. This victory was the subject of many a holy song in Judah's happy land; but the everlasting defeat of the accuser of the brothers and sisters by the angel of the covenant of grace should waken yet more thrilling music in the choirs of the church of the living God.

All the wonders recorded in the book of the wars of the Lord are eclipsed in the gospel annals, for they are but the destruction of men's bodies, the temporary deliverance of cities and of nations from the oppression of war; but the gospel tells of eternal redemption. As spiritual affairs far exceed material interests, so the spiritual victories of God in the midst of His church are far more resplendent than His triumphs against His foes on behalf of Israel. May the Holy Spirit quicken us, raise our courage, strengthen our faith, and confirm our confidence in Him while we think upon what God has done and is doing

in the midst of His church. "There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." Right valiantly has the Lord worked *for us* and *in us;* and He will also do great things *by us*.

I. First, he has fought victoriously **FOR US**. Our God has worked great spiritual victories for us by which all the ingenious weapons of our many adversaries have been snapped.

Let me remind you, beloved, in the first place, of what the Lord our God did in the day of our redemption by the sufferings of Christ. Let us celebrate *the triumphs of Cavalry*. The Lord of angels descended from heaven, and left the glories of His Father's throne to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and to be made in the likeness of man; throughout the whole of His life of humiliation He was attacked by the enemy, but He was victorious at every point. hell strived to empty out all its quivers upon Him, and the sword of Satanic malice sought with its keenest edge to wound Him, but never was He staggered, or so much as scarred, He quenched every fiery dart and repelled every barbed arrow. The prince of this world watched Him with jealous eyes, and scanned Him from head to foot, but found no place for the entrances of sin, nothing within His soul upon which evil could gain a footing. Jesus was unconquerable, to show us that in the power of divine grace manhood may overcome the sword of evil, and break the arrows of temptation. At last the fullness of time ushered in that dreadful night when all the powers of darkness met, and collected all their infernal might for one last tremendous charge; buckler, and sword, and arrow, and every weapon of offense and defense were wielded by the leaguered hosts of hell, but all in vain. Our Champion was hard put to it; He sweat as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground; He was numbered with the transgressors; He was led away like a malefactor, tried and condemned. The Lord Jehovah made to meet on Him the

iniquity of us all, but in all and over all He was more than conqueror! You never can forget, for it is written upon the fleshy tablets of your grateful hearts, how His enemies dragged Him to the mount of crucifixion, fastened Him to the accursed tree, lifted Him up all bleeding and suffering, exposed Him to the glare of the sun, dashed the cross into its place, dislocating all His bones, sat around and stared upon Him, and mocked His miseries, but in all this He remained invincible. These griefs, which were outward and conspicuous to our eyes, were but a small part of His agonies—the inward strife, the internal conflict, the soul-desertion and depression were far heavier; sin's utmost weight, the fury of vengeance, the curse of the law, the sword of justice, the malice of Satan, the bitterness of death—all these He knew and more; and yet, single-handed, He sustained the fight and earned the crown.

That glorious cry, "It is finished," was the deathblow of all the adversaries of His people, the breaking of "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." I think I see before me the hero of Golgotha using His cross as an anvil, and His woes as a hammer, and dashing to shivers bundle after bundle of our sins, those poisoned "arrows of the bow"; trampling on every charge, and destroying every accusation. What glorious blows the mighty breaker gives! How the weapons fly to fragments, beaten small as the dust of the threshing floor! Behold, I see Him drawing from its sheath of hellish workmanship the dread sword of hellish power! Look, He snaps it across His knee as a man breaks dry and brittle firewood, and casts it into the fire. Like David, he cries, "He teaches My hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by My arms." "I have pursued My enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them. And I have consumed them and wounded them that they could not arise: yes, they are fallen under My feet...Then did I beat them as

small as the dust of the earth; I did stamp them as the mire of the street." Beloved, no sin of a believer can now be an arrow to mortally wound him, no condemnation can now be a sword to kill him, for the punishment of our sin was borne by Christ, a full atonement has been made for all our iniquities by our blessed Substitute and Surety. Who now accuses? Who now condemns? Christ has died, yes, rather has risen again. Let hell, if it can, find a single arrow to shoot against the beloved of the Lord; they are all broken, not one of them is left. Christ has emptied the quivers of hell, has quenched every fiery dart, and broken off the head of every arrow of wrath; the ground is strewn with the splinters and relics of the weapons of hell's warfare, which are only visible to us to remind us of our former danger, and of our great deliverance. Sin has no more dominion over us. Jesus has made an end of it, and put it away forever. O you enemy, destruction has come to a perpetual end. Talk of all the wondrous works of the Lord, you who make mention of His name, keep not silent.

When our Lord, after a short sojourn in the grave, rose again on the third day, *His resurrection* effectually crushed all the remaining hopes of hell. So long as He was in the tomb, it might seem as though His people were in jeopardy; but when He "rose again for our justification," our security was no longer in doubt. In His death He paid the debt, in His resurrection He obtained the receipt, and exhibited the precious writing to heaven, and earth, and hell, by nailing the handwriting of ordinances to His cross. The rising of Christ from the grave is to us the warrant of our final perseverance. Has He not Himself said, "Because I live, you shall live also"? It is to us the pledge of our resurrection, for as the Head has arisen, so all the members of the body must arise. Had Jesus seen corruption, had the grave still held His body in vile durance, our hope would have been but slender; but now that Jesus lives, and

death has no more dominion over Him, we rejoice that by one sacrifice He has perfected forever them who are set apart. Our risen Lord shines forth in transcendent majesty beside the empty tomb, surrounded by the broken swords and bucklers of His people's foes—

"Shout, you seraphs! Gabriel, raise
Fame's eternal trump of praise:
Let the earth's remotest bound
Hear the joy-inspiring sound!
'Hallelujah' lives again our glorious King!
'Where, O death, is now your sting?'
Once He died our souls to save;
'Where's your victory, boasting grave?'"

Yet further, when, after 40 days, our Lord *ascended* from us to take possession of the purchased possession, in our name, and to prepare a place for us at the right hand of the Father, in that day He again gave to hell such a defeat as it shall never be able to recover. Had Jesus Christ remained upon the earth, it had been thought that heaven was still shut to believers, and we might have entertained a fear that between us and the celestial gate there would be such hordes of enemies that we would never be able to hew a pathway to our rest. But Jesus has completely cleared the king's highway to glory for all His saints, and they traverse in safety the road to the celestial gate. As the watchmen fled from the grave's mouth when the living Lord arose, and as the stone was rolled away from the sepulcher, so all the fiends that might have kept us out of heaven have also fled, and every barrier to our entrance to the celestial reward is effectually removed. See the incarnate God returning to His throne! Your imaginations can conceive the splendor of His triumphal entrance when all the angels hailed Him with

glad acclaim, and disembodied spirits, who had long ago been redeemed by the foresight of His death, met Him with their congratulations when the Paternal Deity said, "Well done!" and bade Him take His reward at His right hand. Ah, then He led captivity captive, and made a show of His enemies openly. Then He finally broke the "arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle," and gave to His people a confirmation of the assurance that it shall never be possible to keep so much as one of them out of the eternal rest, since their Covenant Head has taken possession on their behalf, to hold it safely for each one until "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Nor is the story quite yet ended. Jesus is now *exalted* far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, but the enemy of our souls, though defeated, continues maliciously to attempt our destruction. Satan's head is bruised, but he still lives, and continues perpetually to assault the saints of God. We seldom stand before the angel without Satan coming forward as our *accuser*. The accuser of the brethren unceasingly clamors against the saints, but here is our joy—whatever may be the arrows of Satan's bow, whatever sword he may wield against us, there *He* stands, our Great Captain, our Shield and the Lord's Anointed, and as fast as the arrows of accusation are shot, He breaks them, and as often as the sword is drawn, He turns aside its edge. Courage, Christian! Your foes may be unceasing in their attacks, but Jesus Christ is unfailing in your protection. For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest, but His intercession comes up perpetually before the eternal throne, and the constant presentation of His omnipotent merit evermore preserves the tempted, succors the needy, and upholds those who are ready to fall. Let us be of good cheer, for there, in the New Jerusalem to which our laboring souls

aspire, the intercession of Jesus breaks "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

Nor does it end there, for here below our exalted Lord is Master over all events; *providence* is ruled and guided by the Man whose head was surrounded with the crown of thorns—

"Lo! In His hands the sovereign keys
Of heaven, and death, and hell."

To this hour the adversaries of the truth of God seek the overthrow of the church of God. *We* may be sometimes idle, but they are always diligent. "The enemy goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." He assails the people of God in successive ages from different points of the compass with cunning and fury, and we would have poor hope, we who are like a few lambs in the midst of wolves, if it were not that our Master is present by His eternal Spirit, and rules all things by His providential government. He can make those wheels which are so high that they are terrible, to revolve that the greatest enemies of the church shall be cut off or shall be converted, and He can raise up from the dunghill men who shall be princes in the midst of Israel, to be defenders of the truth, and shepherds to His people. He can cause to be born in a humble cottage in the woods a Luther, who shall shake off the fetters from the nations; He can bring forth from the wildest village of France a Calvin, whose words shall be as nails fastened by the master of assemblies; and He can raise a flaming Knox, and nourish his fiery spirit in Geneva till Scotland needs him; or raise up in the quiet parsonage of Lutterworth a Wickliffe, to shine as the morning star of the Reformation in England. God is never short of men. He never has to worry Himself of means. He knows no difficulties or dilemmas. If His church needed it, He could tomorrow make

emperors repent of their sins, and doff their crowns to become ministers of the word, and compel the most violent persecutors of the church to crouch at her feet, and lick the dust. Let us be confident in the reigning power of our ever loving Savior; let us be reassured by the history of the church in the past, and expect to see divine interpositions in our own day. Fear not, for still it shall be said of Zion, "There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

For His redeemed ones, it is most evident that the Lord Jesus is more than conqueror, not only putting adverse darts aside, but breaking them; not merely averting the violence of the sword, but breaking that sword; tearing the buckler from the enemy and leaving him defenseless; stripping him of all his arms, both of offense and defense, that his defeat may be total and irretrievable. "Arms and the man, I sing," said the great Roman poet; a nobler theme by far would be, *"Arms and the Son of God."*

II. May we have help from on high while we now ask you to consider the victories which Jesus Christ has won **IN US**.

Brothers and sisters, we who are members of the church of Christ, have been subdued by sovereign grace. Whereas once we were enemies, we are now reconciled unto God by the death of His Son. Now, if we could each tell his story of conversion, the children of God would be ready to burst out with one simultaneous shout of joy, as they perceived that in the midst of His church the Lord, in the hearts of His people, has broken the arrows of the bow! Let me take you back to the time of *your conversion*. Some of us were very stout-hearted. We knew the truth of God, but we did not love it; we understood the gospel, but we abhorred it. We were often entreated to consider the welfare of our souls, but we cared for the frivolities of the moment, and we let the realities of eternity slip by. We were thundered at by the law, we were gently wooed by the gospel;

the tears of a mother united with the earnest warnings of a teacher, and the admonitions of a pastor; but all these were powerless upon our slumbering conscience. Some of us went to great lengths of rebellion, and hardened ourselves more and more, until it seemed impossible for us to do enough against the Lord our God. When we talk of great and vile sinners, it brings tears to our eyes as we remember that such were some of us, but we have been washed. Ah, brothers and sisters, the bringing in of great sinners is indeed a glory to Christ—and the salvation of great moralists is not a secondary victory, for perhaps of the two it is more difficult to subdue the righteous self than the sinful self of men. To have made those who have been kept pure outwardly to feel their inward impurity, and to bewail it, is a triumph great and masterly. Rejoice when the harlot bows before the Savior with breaking heart, be glad when Saul of Tarsus yields his persecuting heart to the Savior's scepter, but equally adore the majesty of love when the young man who has kept all these commandments from his youth up seeks the one thing which he lacks, and trusts his heart with Jesus Christ without delay! When we shall get to heaven, we will astonish the angels with what we shall have to tell, the depths of sin out of which we have been delivered, the fiery lusts from which we have been rescued, the stiff necks that have been made to bow, and the unyielding knees that have been compelled to bend. Glory be unto God. I cannot help saying so again, glory be to God, for as I look around this place and think of some of you in whom God's great and wondrous arm has been revealed in redeeming you from all your iniquities, I dare make it my boast that here the Lord has broken "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

Since conversion, dear friends, how often has the Great Conqueror been obliged to interpose on our behalf to save us from our rebellious lusts? I do not know how you find it, but it

strikes me that conflict is the principal feature of the Christian life this side heaven. We know what communion is; we are no strangers to the banqueting house where the banner of love is waving, but still to contest every inch of ground on the road to immortality, to wrestle hard with sins, and doubts, and fears, is our average experience. We do get beyond this sometimes, but not for long; we have soon to come back again, either to fight with the lions, or Apollyon, or to climb the Hill Difficulty, or to traverse the Valley of the Shadow of Death, or to pass through Vanity Fair, or to endure the sleepy influences of the Enchanted Ground, or to be in Doubting Castle. It is not an easy path to heaven; it is warfare from beginning to end. There are times with us when we are so sorely beset with temptations that our feet have almost gone, and our steps have well near slipped. We have long before this fallen, to our shame and confusion, if another arm than ours had not held us up. Oh, what strong temptations some of us have endured! Those of us, who have passionate, fiery, strong, willful natures, have to fight frequently against suggestions which we would scarcely whisper in the ear of those we love the best. We have overcome as yet, we have been upheld till now, but who could have held us up but the Lord Himself? Our temptations occasionally are plied so craftily, and are so exactly fitted to the situation, so precisely adapted to the state of our bodily health, or the condition of our outward business, that it is a wonder that we have not yielded. Yes, and we have almost yielded, as we must mournfully acknowledge, and then Apollyon has hissed at us from between his teeth: "You have been unfaithful to your Lord already in your heart. You know you have gone back in your soul, and broken your covenant. How can you hope to be accepted at the last? Go back to the world at once; for you are playing the hypocrite, you know you are," he says, "for your heart is deceitful. Go back, therefore, in your outward life."

Though we have been able still to wield the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and have kept the weapon of all-prayer in our hand, yet we have been almost overcome, and have narrowly escaped. We have to bless God that we have escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler, but only escaped as by the skin of our teeth. *We* have not broken the arrows of the bow, *we* have not been able to break the sword of the enemy; but Christ has done it, blessed be His name! We have fled to the foot of His cross, we have looked up and seen the streams of His precious blood; we have cowered down beneath the shadow of the atonement, and we have come away strong to fight with our corruptions and to overcome our besetting sins.

Further than this, those who know anything of the Inner life, if their inward struggles are at all like mine, will frequently have to contend with *doubts and fears,* suspicions and forebodings. Glory be to God, it is not always so. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." My brothers and sisters, we often walk in darkness and see no light. Many of God's people are harassed with questions as to their interest in Christ, or are afflicted with deep depression of spirit; and when it is so, if we try to comfort them, what a task it is! I have tried all the promises of the Bible which I could remember upon some of the sorely troubled ones. I have reminded them of the person of Christ, and His consequent power; of the suffering of Christ, and His consequent ability to cleanse from sin; but frequently I have had this answer, "When God shuts one up, who can deliver?" and I have been made to feel, as a pastor, very often, that *I* could not quench the fiery darts of the enemy for other people, that *I* could not break the sword of the enemy for others, or even for myself! What a sweet relief it is to be assured that Jesus can break the arrows

of the bow, subdue our doubts, and cause His people with reviving courage to say, "Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for when I fall I shall rise again!" I have seen many excellent believers whose lives have been examples to us all, who, nevertheless, have said, "If you knew what was in my heart, you would not speak to me as a Christian. Oh, how great are my sins! I feel that I live at a great distance from God; I am of little or no service to His church. When I am in trouble, I do not act like a believer, and cast my burden upon the Lord, but I bear it till my soul is sorely burdened." Then I have read to them such a Psalm as the one which follows our text, where David says, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. You hold my eyelids open: I am so troubled that I cannot speak...Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" I have always found such souls get relief when they have come to Christ just as they did at first; and if they have said, "I am afraid I never did come," they have soon rejoiced in the light of His countenance when they have been able to add, "But if I never came, I will now"—

"Just as I am—though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fights within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

To creep to the foot of the cross feeling as if the earth would open and swallow you up, and yet resolved that if you perish, you will perish with your arms about the atonement,

resting on the sacrifice of Jesus—this is the sure way to comfort. Tried one, you cannot perish beneath the cross! You will be safe there! Standing there, you shall understand that there Jesus breaks "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."

Not to leave this subject for a moment, I would notice that all which is yet to come in the inner life is secured by our Lord Jesus Christ. As up till now we have not been mortally wounded, nor have cast away our confidence altogether, so shall it be to the close. No doubt, other conflicts will arise: the past seems to warrant our prophesying that the future will not be calm and peaceful; the hours of old age and consequent debility are stealing on apace. The days of sickness, and all the depression of spirit which sickness usually brings, are drawing near. Last of all, and most terrible to some, the solemn articles of death approaches, and speak of them as we may, death is terrible to a living man. The river of death is cold and chill, and for a man to plunge into it boldly, will need more than ordinary courage. But let us not sit down and deplore our future ills, nor petulantly wish to avoid life's trials—we cannot if we could; let us set our face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and go onward, persuaded that every foe in advance is already defeated. Christ Jesus leads the way. No enemy has been able to stand against Him, and none shall stand against us all the days of *His* life. Death has lost its sting since Jesus died. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I wish that I had the power to speak of these things as they deserve, but I leave them with you as topics for your thankfulness. O my brothers and sisters, how we ought to praise and bless God for what He has worked in us from the first day until now! A dear friend said just before service, "I am very grateful, and what is more, if I am not grateful, I ought to

be, for I owe so much." Oh, if ever I get to heaven, I will sing the loudest of any there, for I am sure I shall owe more to God than any of you! The responsibilities of my office overwhelm me; when I sit and think of the many, many, many who call me by the name of pastor, and the tens of thousands who read the word which I preach every week, I am overwhelmed. If I shall at the close of life be able to say as George Fox, the Quaker, said after his last sermon, "I am clear! I am clear!"—I would give all the world if I had it, to know that I shall be able to say that; for this is my one and sole desire, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but being wrapped about with the fair white linen of His. If safe at last, I shall have to praise Him who has delivered me from a thousand temptations, and kept my feet safe in slippery places. I know that to each one of you your place seems as peculiar as mine does to me; I do not doubt but what I am as much fitted for mine as you are for yours, and therefore, I believe that your condition has its peculiar dangers, and I doubt not you receive peculiar helps and special deliverances. Defraud not my Master of your gratitude! Give Him your hearts. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar, for God is our God which has showed us His light! Let what He has done for us bind us to Him, and encourage us to hope in Him. "You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice."

III. And now, lastly, as this has been done for us, and in us, it will be done **BY US**.

The church of God is God's battle-ax and weapons of war in fighting His battles for truth and righteousness; and, up till now, history shows that none have been able to stand against God in the midst of His people. If I could give you a brief epitome of church history, I should be glad to do so, but there is not time this morning, and will not be, I fear, at any of our

services today; but it is a fact, that along the whole spiritual battle the victory has been to God's people. At first the enemy attacked the church with persecution. Those rough and barbarous weapons of war were used which were to be found in the Coliseum, with its wild beasts and cruel men, or in the axe, the stake, and the rack. Men have grown somewhat wiser now, but in those days, men and devils sought to destroy the testimony of our God by the destruction of the saints; and what was the result? O persecution, where are your trophies? The virgin daughter of Zion has shaken her head at you, and laughed you to scorn. The church, like a good ship beaten by the waves, has cut through every billow, and has been hastened on her way by the storm. Washed and cleansed and purged by opposition, the more the church has been opposed the more brightly glorious has she shone forth. God was in the midst of her and helped her; He helped her, and that right early. Our pulse beats fast, and our blood grows hot when we read of the persecutions of old pagan Rome. And when we turn to the story of the Reformation, and see the hunted ones among the Alps, the Huguenots driven out of France, our own Lollards and the covenanters of Scotland; we feel proud to belong to such a race of men, we glory in their lineage, and are amazed that the policy of persecution should so long have been continued by shrewd, sharp-witted men, when it ought to have been clear to them that in every case in which they persecuted the church of God, it multiplied the more exceedingly! God has indeed broken "the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle," by sustaining His people in times of persecution.

The church has also been assailed with deadly errors. There is scarcely a Doctrine of our holy faith which has not been denied. Every age produces a new crop of heretics and infidels. Just as the current of the times may run, so does the stream of

infidelity change its direction. We have lived long enough, some of us, to see three or four species of atheists and deists rise and die, for they are a short-lived generation. We have seen the church attacked by weapons borrowed from geology and anatomy, and then from the schools of criticism fierce warriors have emerged, but she survives all her antagonists. She has been assailed from almost every quarter, but the fears that tarry in the church today are blown to the wind tomorrow; yes, the church has been enriched by the attacks, for her divines have set to work to study the points that were dubious, to strengthen the walls that seemed a little weak, and so her towers have been strengthened, and her bulwarks consolidated. To disprove the Word of God and to overthrow Christianity, is still the fond dream of wicked men, and therefore we may expect yet worse attacks. There are looming in the future, even now, fresh clouds of skeptical theory, but as certainly as God has blown away these things like chaff before the wind in times gone by, so will He in the days that are yet to come.

It is in the church itself that the victory is generally won. I am inclined to believe that the writers against different heresies, when they have done their best, have done comparatively little with the masses; and that our learned men, when they assail new forms of skepticism, however successful they may be with the few, do but very little with the many. The true place of victory is not in the scholar's study, nor in the classroom of the university, but in the church itself. If you want to answer the infidel, live a holy life. If you desire to stop the skeptic, let your faith bring forth patience, your patience experience, and your experience hope that makes not ashamed. Zeal for the truth of God as it is in Jesus, earnest prayer for the extension of the redeemer's Kingdom, and industrious effort for the spread of the truth, will be much more victorious over the insinuations of evil men than the best arguments that reason can devise.

There, on the death-bed of the consumptive girl with scarcely strength enough to speak, she bears witness that Christ is precious, and His love a sweet savor in her departing moments—THERE our precious Jesus breaks the arrows of the bow! There, in the working man's cottage, which was once the haunt of drunkenness and the den of vice, and the abode of misery—but which has now become a little paradise, where the children are trained for heaven, where father and mother are knit together in love, THERE the grace of God breaks the shield, and the sword, and the battle! There where the weeping sinner finds peace, where the troubled merchant wins rest to his spirit, where the tempted young man overcomes the temptation, and stands fast in the day of trial—THERE it is where suffering is endured with patience, where labor is performed with perseverance, where the command is obeyed with holiness, and sin is resisted with steadfastness; THERE it is that the gospel of Jesus breaks the "arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle." My dear friends, let nothing ever dismay us as a church. God has given us some amazing triumphs in the conversion of remarkable sinners; let nothing, therefore, ever hinder us in seeking the conversion of men. Some of you I know are industrious every day in seeking to turn men to Christ. Do not give up the most hardened cases, where you get nothing but a sneer, or even where the door is slammed in your face. Do not be cast down at rebuffs or blasphemies; those who are most opposed frequently yield first. It is harder work to deal with those who say, "Yes, yes, yes," but who forget what we say—it is more hopeless work to deal with them than with those who turn against us and seek to tear us apart. In God's name push on, you soldiers of the cross! The darkest alley may be made light; the back courts of London may become the courts of King Jesus; the house that is now a den of infamy may be purged, and be made to have a church within

its walls. Be confident in the energy of the eternal Spirit, that He can subdue the hardened heart! Be steadfast in the exercise of minister, and continue to preach the gospel, for it is by preaching through the Holy Spirit that men shall be saved!

Brothers and sisters, we anticipate the happy day when the whole world shall be converted to Christ. We are looking forward to the time when the gods of the heathen shall be cast to the moles and to the bats; when Roman Catholicism shall be exploded, and the crescent of Mohammed shall never again wave to cast its baleful rays upon nations. We expect the time when every sail that whitens the deep shall bear the herald of the cross, when kings shall bow down before the Prince of Peace, and all nations shall call their redeemer blessed. I know that some despair of this. They look upon the world as a vessel that is breaking up and going to pieces, never to float again. We are to pluck, they say, the elect from off her, but the world itself is to be destroyed, and cast away as an unclean thing. We are of another mind, and look for something more glorifying to God than this desponding theory. We know that the world and all that is in it is one day to be burnt up, and afterwards we look for new heavens and for a new earth; but we cannot read our Bibles without the conviction that—

"Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does his successive journeys run."

We are not discouraged by the length of His delays, we are not disheartened by the period which He allots to the church in which to strive and struggle with little success and much defeat. We believe that God will never allow this world, which has once seen Christ's blood shed upon it, to be always the devil's stronghold. Brothers and sisters, Christ came here to take the lion by the beard and to tear him apart, and to deliver

this world entirely and altogether from the detested sway of the powers of darkness. It shall be so, for Jesus cannot lose His reward. We expect to see the mountain of the Lord arise; it has arisen now—it is no mean hill already; but we expect to see it rise higher, and higher, and higher, till it shall be exalted upon the top of the hills, above all the highest peaks of earth, and nations *shall* flow unto it. The handful of corn upon the top of the mountains shall yet shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. What a shout shall that be when men and angels shall join together to cry, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!" What a satisfaction will it be in that day to have had a share in the fight, to have helped to break the arrows of the bow, and to have aided in winning the victory for our Lord Jesus!

In closing, let me solemnly remark how unhappy are those who are on the side of evil! It is a losing side, and it is a side where to lose is to lose *forever*. Be reconciled unto God! This is the gospel message. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little."

Lastly, how happy are they who trust themselves with this conquering Lord, and who fight side by side with Him doing their little in His name and by His strength! Thrice happy, my brothers and sisters, are we to have the honor of winning souls! Let us seek to get more of such honor! Let us be insatiable to promote Christ's gospel! Let us be ambitious to the highest bent of our minds to extend the redeemer's kingdom! And God do so to you, and more also, as you shall seek to do unto Him, and unto the sons of men for their good, evermore. Amen.

792 MARY MAGDALENE – MARK 16:9

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, January 26th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils." — Mark 16:9

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — John 20:1-18]

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING, when truthful, is almost always profitable. As the spouse of old desired to see the footsteps of the flock, so souls in distress are always happy to observe the proofs that others have trod that same pathway before. It may be, and I trust it shall be, that while we are speaking upon the life of Magdalene, and showing how the Lord was pleased to lead her up from the depths of mental distress to the heights of spiritual joy, some who may be in like circumstances may be led to hope that for them also there may be deliverance, and others who have already received like favors, may have their grateful recollections refreshed, and may be made to bless the Lord who brought them up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and has now set their feet upon a rock. We shall begin with Mary of Magdalene where God began with her, in a way of effectual grace.

I. Mary Magdalene furnishes us, in the first place, with **A SAD INSTANCE OF SATANIC POWER**.

She does not appear to have been a great sinner; it is scarcely possible, and certainly very improbable, that she could have been a transgressor in the sense in which the term "Magdalene" is generally understood. Custom has attached the title of Magdalene to those who have forfeited their good name by open sins against the seventh commandment. Mistaken though it is, let the name always remain as the sole treasure of fallen women, for, if we can give them one honorable designation to act as a shield, pray let them have it, for the world is cold enough and scornful enough towards such offenders. It is worthwhile, however, to declare for the honor of Mary Magdalene, that she was no Magdalene in the modern sense; it could scarcely have been so, she was probably a raving demoniac, therefore not at all likely to fall into the sins of the flesh. We are never told of her that she was a great sinner; in fact, not a word is said against her personal character; we are simply informed that she was possessed with seven devils, which is an affliction rather than a crime. I do not deny that sin may have prepared her for the Satanic possession, and was no doubt also occasioned by it, but she is not brought before us in Scripture as a transgressor, nor is she the representative of great offenders, but rather the type of a class of persons who for years are sorely vexed in heart, greatly depressed in spirit, heavily burdened with despondency, bound with chains of melancholy, subject to distracting forebodings, to alarms of coming wrath, and to an insufferable despair.

Mary Magdalene represents those who have come under the tormenting and distracting power of Satan, and whose lamp of joy is quenched in tenfold night. They are imprisoned not so much in the dens of sin as in the dungeons of sorrow, not as criminal as they are wretched, nor so depraved as they are desolate. We do not with any certainty understand the precise nature of being possessed with a devil. Holy Scripture has not

been pleased to acquaint us with the philosophy of possessions, but we know what the outward symptoms were. Persons possessed with devils were unhappy; they found the gloom of the sepulcher to be their most congenial resort. They were unsocial and solitary. If they were permitted, they broke away from all those dear associations of the family circle which give half the charms to life—they delighted to wander in dry places, seeking rest and finding none—they were pictures of misery, images of woe. Such was the seven times unhappy Magdalene, for into her there had entered a complete band of devils. She was overwhelmed with seven seas of agony, loaded with seven manacles of despair, encircled with seven walls of fire. Neither day nor night afforded her rest, her brain was on fire, and her soul foamed like a boiling caldron. Miserable soul! No dove of hope brought the olive branch of peace to her forlorn spirit, she sat in the darkness and saw no light—her dwelling was in the valley of the shadow of death. Among all the women of Magdala there was none more wretched than she, the unhappy victim of restless and malicious demons. Those who were possessed with these evil spirits, were defiled thereby, as well as made unhappy; for a heart cannot become a kennel for the hounds of hell without being rendered filthy and polluted. I suppose that in addition to the natural corruptions which would be in Mary as well us in ourselves, there would be a more than human nimbleness to evil, a vivacity, an outspokenness about all her sinful propensities which only the indwelling fiend could give. Satan being within would be sure to stir up the coals of impure thoughts and evil desires, so that the fire of sin would burn vehemently. Her inner self may have been sorely troubled with such excess of wickedness, but she was without power to dampen the furnace of her mind. She would be incessantly assaulted by unearthly profanities and hideous suggestions; not as with us, proceeding from the devil without, who is a dreaded

antagonist, but from seven devils within, who had entrenched themselves upon a dreadful vantage ground. She was in that sense, no doubt, greatly polluted, although it would be difficult to say how far she was accountable for it, on account of the dislodgment of her reason. In addition to the unhappiness and the defilement occasioned by Satanic possession, these persons were frequently dangerous to others and to themselves. Sometimes, we read, they were cast into the fire, and others into water; some cut themselves with knives or sharp stones, others tore their garments in pieces, and even when bound in chains—according to the old-fashioned method of controlling lunatics—they burst their bonds. Such persons must have been very undesirable inhabitants of any house, however remote their chamber. It must frequently have been necessary to confine them apart, for in their madness they were not to be trusted; for, as is often the case, those who had been nearest and dearest to them, became the first objects of their enmity.

To give a spiritual turn to the subject, let me remark that it is one of the most dreadful things about some of those who are plunged in unbelief, that the mischief of their misery is not confined to themselves, but extends to their families and connections. Their example drips like the upas tree, with poison; they are like the clouds that gathered over Sodom, full of fiery hail; they bring sadness and sorrow wherever their influence is felt. The man who has laid in beds of spices, spreads perfume on all sides; but the man who is familiar with horrors, like one fresh from the morgue, bears all the seeds of death about him in the gloom and melancholy which he spreads abroad. To sum up much in a few words, there is no doubt that Mary Magdalene would have been considered by us to be demented—she was, practically, a maniac. Reason was unshipped, and Satan stood at the helm instead of reason, and the poor ship was hurried here and there under the guidance of

demons. What a dreadful state to be in! And yet, dear friends, though actual Satanic possession is unknown among us now, we have seen several cases extremely like it, and we know at this hour some who baffle altogether all attempts to comfort them, and make us feel that only the Good Physician can give them rest. I remember a man of excellent character, well beloved by his family and esteemed by his neighbors, who was for 20 years enveloped in unutterable gloom. He ceased to attend the house of God, because he said it was of no use; and although always ready to help in every good word and work, yet he had an abiding conviction upon him that, personally, he had no part nor lot in this matter, and never could have. The more you talked to him, the worse he became; even prayer seemed but to excite him to more fearful despondency. In the providence of God I was called to preach the word in his neighborhood; he was induced to attend, and, by God's gracious power, under the sermon he obtained a joyful liberty. After 20 years of anguish and unrest, he ended his weary roaming at the foot of the cross, to the amazement of his neighbors, the joy of his household, and the glory of God. Nor did his peace of mind subside, for until the Lord gave him a happy admission into eternal rest, he remained a vigorous believer, trusting and not being afraid. Others are around us for whom we earnestly pray that they also may be brought out of prison to praise the name of the Lord.

Magdalene's case was a perfectly helpless one; men could do nothing for her. All the surgery and medicine in the world would have been wasted upon her singular malady. Had it been any form of physical disease or purely mental derangement, help might have been attainable, but who is a match for the crafty and cruel fiends of the pit of hell? No drugs can lull them to sleep; no knife can tear them from the soul. The loving friend and the skillful adviser stood equally powerless,

perplexed, bewildered, and dismayed. Mary was in a hopeless condition. There was nothing known by any, even the wise men of the east, of any method by which seven evil spirits could be dislodged. However expensive the remedy, her relatives would have resorted to it; but who can cope with devils? Doubtless all who knew her thought that death would be a great relief to her, and would relieve her family of wearisome anxiety and fear. Although willing to help, they could not aid in the slightest degree, and had the hourly sorrow of seeing her endure an agony which they could not alleviate. Magdalene was the victim of Satanic influence in a most fearful form—sevenfold were the spirits which possessed her; and there are men and women nowadays who are tempted by the great enemy of souls to a most awful degree. Some of us have endured temporary seasons of frightful depression, which have qualified us to sympathize with those who are more constantly lashed by the fury of the infernal powers. We too have had our horror of great darkness. We have groaned with David, "I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. . . I am feeble and sorely broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. . . My heart pants, my strength fails me: as for the light of my eyes, it also is gone from me." We have been, though only for a few days or hours at a time, reduced to such an utter prostration of heart, that our soul chose strangling rather than life, for the sorrows of death compassed us, and the pains of hell got hold upon us—we found trouble and sorrow. Believe me, brothers and sisters, this is no child's play, but a thing to turn the hair gray, and plow the furrows of the brow. It is no trivial sorrow to lament with the weeping prophet, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger. From above has He sent fire into

my bones, and it prevails against them: He has spread a net for my feet, He has turned me back: He has made me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by His hands: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck: He has made my strength to fall, the Lord has delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up."

It is a sad fact that some persons continue for months and years to drink this cup of trembling. John Bunyan's case is to the point, for he floundered in the Slough of Despond as long as any of the Pilgrims whom he has so graphically described. In his instance, those succeeding shadows, those variations of unbelief, those recurring glooms all arose from the same fruitful source of ill—Satan was afraid that he was about to lose a bond slave, and therefore awakened himself to prevent his captive's escape. Like the city of Mansoul when besieged by the troops of Immanuel, when Diabolus was loath to leave, the evil one barricades the doors, and strengthens the walls, so that there may be no entrance for the word of truth. Moreover, as we are told in the Revelation, the devil has great wrath when he knows that his time is short; and he takes care, like a bad tenant, to do all the mischief he can before he is ejected. I may be addressing some such persons here, or in later days my words may meet the eyes of poor tortured souls, O that they might find rest! It is painful in the extreme to meet with such unhappy minds, they are the great difficulty of a pastor's work; so great indeed is the difficulty, that workers with little faith are ready to give up the task, and to leave the matter as impracticable. We have known those who have felt that they could pray no longer for their inconsolable friends: verily, beloved, we must not yield to so heartless a suggestion! As we said the other Sabbath morning, [Sermon #789, Vol. 14, *Lingerers Hastened,* preached January 12, 1868] until the gate of hell is shut upon a man, we must not cease to pray for him; and if we see him hugging the

very doorposts of damnation, we must go to the mercy seat and beseech the arm of grace to pluck him from his dangerous position. While there is life there is hope, and, although the soul is almost smothered with despair, we must not despair for it, but rather awaken ourselves to awaken the almighty arm. The case of the Magdalene is a mirror in which many souls wrung with anguish may see themselves.

II. Secondly, Mary Magdalene became **A GLORIOUS TROPHY OF DIVINE GRACE**.

She is described in the text as, "Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils." Sovereign grace is resplendent in Mary's history; in the first place, because this cure was *unsought by her*. Others who were sick sought the healing hand of Jesus, but no person possessed of an evil spirit ever did or ever could cry for deliverance to the Son of David: their friends might bring them, but they never came of themselves. The evil spirit drives men as far as possible away from Christ, and clamors against Jesus as a tormentor; but it never guides men into the pathway of the merciful Savior. Even thus is it with us all, and especially with desponding souls. If we are saved, it is not because we have the first motions of desire towards Christ, but because eternal love casts its cords around us, and draws us towards the Lord Jesus. There may be disputes about this as matter of Doctrine, but I do not believe it can be questioned as a fact in experience. All believers unite in the song—

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God."

We all feel that, if we are converted, the power which turned us is from above—

"'Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For, Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee,
But You have chosen me:
You from the sin that stained me
Washed me and set me free,
And to this end ordained me,
That I should live to Thee."

If we have repented, our repentance was not a plant indigenous to the barren soil of our corrupt hearts— the seed of it was sown within by a gracious hand. If we have believed in Jesus, our faith was not fashioned on our own anvil, but bestowed upon us from the armory of God. Faith is as much the gift of God as salvation itself. Brothers and sisters, we cannot, in our own cases, do otherwise than ascribe all the glory to sovereign grace. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." "I am found of them who sought Me not." No sinner is beforehand with God, but God's preventive grace outruns the sinner's first desire; yes, divine grace comes to dead souls when as yet they are not capable of a right emotion. Mary's case, as it illustrates this principle, may help us to see clearly the great love with which Jesus loved us, even when we were dead in sins. Poor trembling soul, Jesus can come to you if you cannot come to Him. If your miseries have shut *you* up, they cannot shut *Him* out. Your extremity is God's opportunity, therefore be of good cheer.

It is most likely that Mary *resisted* the healing hand, for so it was with other demoniacs: "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God?" The devil was no sooner aware of Christ's presence than he began to cry out against his Conqueror. If it were not so with Mary, it certainly is so with us; and especially with the subjects of despair. How we resisted

conscience! We used what means we could to strangle it, so that its cries might not alarm us. How we labored to quench the Holy Spirit! We had no heart to leave the ways of flesh-pleasing lust, we held to our iniquities as the leech to the flesh. We were willing to run all risks of hell, and lose the glories of heaven. We chose our delusions and hugged our destructions—we were in darkness, and we loved darkness rather than the light of God, because our deeds were evil. Our corrupt heart was enmity against God, and was not reconciled to him, neither indeed could it be. Strange to say, despair is often voluntary, and men resolve to remain in it, being as fond of the prison as the poor wretch who after years of confinement found liberty to be a pain. Like David's fool, we abhor all manner of meat, though dying for lack of it; we blow out the candles lest we should see the light; and we battle with the mercy which comes to our rescue. Great Lord, what a madman a sinner is! How irrational are those who pine in despondency, and yet thrust hope away with both their hands! It is a hard task for the surgeon when his patient tears open the veins which he labors to bind up. His skill must be great if he can heal a patient who struggles in his arms, and refuses his affectionate care. Brothers and sisters, since in a measure, we have all acted thus, let us admire the dear Patience and precious love which bore with our ill manners and would not let us die! How shall we magnify, sufficiently, effectual grace which without violating the freedom of our will, led our captivity captive, making us willing in the day of His power? Let the highest and sweetest notes of all believing psalmody be to omnipotent grace, which worked in us according to the working of His Mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand. Glory be to God, though a legion of devils possessed the heart, the power of Jesus is able to cast them out of him, yes, and to set aside the present mad

unwillingness which makes the sinner despise his own mercy and hasten to his own ruin.

Those possessed with devils were healed *by a word* from Jesus. Beloved, if we have been saved, the instrument which the Holy Spirit used was the word, either read in private or heard from the lips of God's minister. "He sent His word and healed them." The word is the living and incorruptible seed. The ordinance of preaching can scarcely be too much prized, for "it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them who believe" "For the preaching of the cross is to them who perish, foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." You who are desponding, I pray you, do not forsake the gathering of yourselves together; although despair may hang about you, still resort to the place where the word is dispensed, and before long like that daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound for 18 years, who yet went up to the synagogue, you shall, like she was, be made whole. While the Word of God is within your reach, there may yet be a love-word for you, even for you. While earnest lips are telling out the love of Jesus, wait with the hope that as the small rain drops upon the tender herb, divine grace may drop lovingly upon you. "Faith comes by hearing." Why may it not come to you? The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come in His Temple; He may tarry, but to every sincere seeker His coming is sure.

She was healed instantaneously, for the cures of our Lord were always such. He said, "Come out of her," to the unclean spirits, and out came the spirits without delay, so that in a single moment, poor demoniac Mary was made to sit at Jesus' feet in peace, and in her right mind. My brothers and sisters, what a change it must have been for her! Her soul had been like the Lake of Galilee when lashed with a storm—but Christ had said, "Peace, be still," and now there was a great calm! She had been ready to tear herself and hurt others, but now she was obedient

to the Master's command, and ministered to Him with joy; she drank in the words of truth, and told them out to others: defiling influences were cast out of her, and she sought after holiness. Had you met her after her cure, you would not have known her to be the same woman. Those disheveled locks no longer remained to identify the maniac and those straining eyes and that tortured brow, and all the air and bearing of a distraught one—all these were changed. She was admitted into society as a reasonable being; she was taken into the family circle us a welcome member—Jesus became her teacher, and His apostles her friends. What a miracle of love! Let us entertain hope for our friends in their worst estate that the same may happen to them. Perhaps God may permit some of His people to fall into this desperate condition, that He may exhibit illustrious instances of what conversion can do. In heaven there is joy over a sinner's repentance—angels do not rejoice in extraordinary conversions only, but "over one sinner that repents"; still, as far us you and I are concerned, when we sit at church meetings and hear of cases of conversion, the more remarkable ones give us greatest joy. When we hear of a sinner brought to Christ, or of another being comforted who had been in dreadful depression of spirit, we are all filled with wonder and delight. It sheds a luster over the Lord's work, and acts like a tonic to our spirits, it refreshes the doubting ones, and those who have become dispirited in service, take courage and say, "We shall never doubt again, for after such an instance as this, we must believe that all things are possible with God." I think the Lord allows these Magdalenes to be here and there discovered, that they may be proof to the entire world that He can do whatever He wills, and that none are beyond His power. Do I address one who is in such a state? I cannot pass on without the hope that such a troubled mind may speedily look to Jesus. Friend, He can heal you! I know the devil within you

says, "You are cast out forever," but Satan is the father of lies, therefore care not for his suggestions. Did you notice how the text declares that Jesus *cast out* the seven devils? The evil ones did not go out themselves; Magdalene did not drive them out, but *Jesus cast* them out with force and power. The evil one is strong, but Christ is stronger than he, and drives him out speedily when he comes to claim dominion. "Ah," you say, "If He ever gets the devil out of me, I will praise Him." That's the very reason why I think He will do it—in order that He may win your heart, and make you, as long as you live, to wonder, and adore, and admire.

III. After she had thus obtained her healing, she became **AN ARDENT FOLLOWER OF CHRIST**.

We are informed by Mark and by Luke, that Mary Magdalene and other holy women followed Jesus into Galilee upon His memorable preaching tour; and when He came up from Galilee to Jerusalem, we find Mary still at the head of that blessed company. I suppose that she had no family, most probably no children, and that her relatives may have come to feel as if she was not one of them at all, through her having been so long possessed. She probably possessed some small property which yielded her sufficient income for her needs. When she was restored, her friends, though exceedingly glad to hear it, might feel as if she had never been one of the family, and therefore did not wish her to return to them, especially when she had become a Christian. Everything leads us to suppose that she had no one near who claimed her personal care, and having a little income, she resolved to devote her life to listening to the Man who had delivered her from her terrible disease. A wise resolve! Happy was she to be allowed to hear His gracious words and see His mighty deeds. She not only listened to Him, but she followed Him. Whoever might turn away, the Magdalene was always close at His side. Through

floods and flames, if He was pleased to lead, she had resolved to go. In addition to this, we are told that she ministered unto Him of her substance. That bag which Judas carried, would always have been empty had it not been for this woman of Magdala, and for the wife of Herod's steward (and perhaps Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus), but these generous hearts, knowing that the laborer is worthy of his hire, were glad to contribute of their temporal goods to Him who so greatly enriched them in spiritual things.

So Magdalene gave herself, her ears, her feet, her heart, her substance, her all to Jesus. It was not an unusual thing in the Jewish nation for great rabbis to be followed both by men and women in their tours of instruction throughout the country, so that she was not outraging the customs of her people. No doubt our Lord would have said to Mary, "Go home to your friends," if duty required her there, but as she had no other duties to demand her attention, she was allowed to give up all her time to sacred study and to hallowed service. Now, it is not desirable that you or I should leave our kindred and forsake our vocations, but we can nevertheless abide with Jesus as closely as the Magdalene. If we have been delivered from great sin or from great despair, should we not say in our souls, "Now, from this day I will be the constant student of Jesus Christ's teaching; the gospel has done so much for me, that I will seek to know all of it that can be known this side of the grave. I will pry into its mysteries, press into its spiritualities, and learn its precepts. And while I am a learner I will also be a follower. Where Christ is I will go. His example shall be law to me. I will pray to have His Spirit. I will ask to be conformed to His image, and what the Master was, that shall the servant be. "I will give to Him of my substance; if I can, I will give much, but if I have not much, I will give in fair proportion. I will make a system of offering to God—He shall have a set portion of all my income, and that

I will put aside so that when there is a call for it, I shall not imagine that I am giving from my own purse, but I will give my Lord's money, which has already been consecrated. Then I shall not feel as if I were giving, but as if I were only a steward, handing out what belonged to Christ." Where persons love little, do little, and give little, we may shrewdly suspect that they have never had much affliction of heart for their sins, and that they think they owe but very little to divine grace. He who has received much, if his heart is right, is sure to give much to the Lord, and to say—

"And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great
That I would give Him all."

Behold and admire the difference between the poor demoniac and the faithful follower of Christ— the woman possessed with seven devils, and now the honorable Christian woman ministering unto the Lord of angels! What cannot grace do? No doubt, Mary of Magdala had to suffer much in thus following Christ, for all the disciples had to partake in Christ's cross. They were all thought to be madmen and fools in taking up with the man of Nazareth, but we never read that Mary shrank. "From that time many went back, and walked no more with Him," but Magdalene was true. Again we read, "Many were offended at Him because of this saying," but we find not that the woman of Magdala was offended. She held to her Lord in holy faith. She knew the Shepherd's voice, and she followed Him where ever He might be pleased to lead. Happy are those who from their earliest days have been led to see their indebtedness to Christ, and are now resolved to cleave to Him, to serve Him with all their heart, and soul, and strength, to sit

at His feet to catch His words, and then to go abroad and practice what they have learned! I wish we could all attain to a high state of spirituality, that we were stricter in our obedience, more close in our communion, more consecrated in our actions. Perhaps it is because we think we have had little forgiven, or owe but little, that therefore we are such little doers and little lovers. O Holy Spirit, out of the great sinners of this wicked city, out of the midst of horrible blasphemers, or out of the midst of those who are far gone in horrible despair, call men and women who shall become enthusiasts, flaming with vehement devotion to the Lord!

IV. Magdalene appears to us farther on in Scripture as a **FAITHFUL ADHERENT TO HER MASTER UNDER TRIAL**.

It was a dark day for the disciples when Christ was crucified, amid mocking and jeering enemies. We are told by Mark, that Magdalene and Mary, the wife of Cleophas, stood afar off and watched our Lord; but we are informed by John that, among others, there stood at the foot of the cross, Mary Magdalene. I suppose that at the first, when our Lord was nailed to the tree, the disciples could not get into the inner ring, the priests and the Jews were so angry, and the Roman soldiers were so rough, that a woman, however brave, might not venture there. Therefore, as they could not do what they would, they did what they could; they stood at a distance and sobbed and sighed, until their eyes were red, and their hearts were swollen with anguish at the sad sight of Him whom they loved mocked and despised, and shamefully put to death. But by-and-by the crowd grew tired of their cruel amusement, and suddenly there was a darkness over all the land—and it may be that then these timid doves mustered courage and flew to the foot of the tree, passed unnoticed through the soldiers and the crowd, and stood at His feet, and though they could not help Him, yet they could rally round His cross. If they could not feel the nails, and

bleed as He did, yet their hearts were bleeding, and the nails went through their souls. Where was Peter? Where was James? Philip and Andrew, and Nathanael, where were they? I do not know, but I know where Magdalene was; she was at the tree of doom there, hard by her Lord, glad to confess a persecuted Christ! Here is the test of true love. To follow Christ in peaceful times is easy, but to follow hard after Him when He is despised and rejected of men—here is the pinch. Ah, some of you young people profess to be Christians when you are with Christian people, but will you bear it when your companions sneer at you as a cant and a hypocrite? Can you follow your Lord? Can you follow your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that He has the living word, and none upon earth beside? Can you stand for Him when you have to suffer loss and reproach, and when His name is the drunkard's song and the fool's proverb? If you can, then blessed be the divine grace that has taught you to practice so hard a lesson. If there are any who can do this readily, surely they are such as once passed through the deepest waters of soul trouble.

We find Mary, lastly, at the sepulcher, viewing the place where the His body was laid, and how it was laid; and they spent the evening till the Sabbath hour approached in preparing the spices; then they rested, like devout women, upon the seventh day. It was deep love that made the Magdalene follow the corpse of the Well-Beloved right to the tomb. Of that lifeless body every limb was dear to her. He had worked so great a thing in her, that she could not but feel her heart melt at the thought of His corpse being treated with disrespect. She must see whether they laid it tenderly, whether they put it into its rest with gentleness and honor. She was first at the sepulcher, and was the first to whom Christ appeared! She was faithful to the end. She won the commendation of those of whom it is said, "He who endures to the end, the same shall be saved."

Be it yours and mine, my brothers and sisters, to cling to the truth of God, even though, like Elijah, we have to say, "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." To keep to a dead cause and an expiring church; to cling to Christ when His cause is rolled in the mire; to be ready to be drowned with Christ, to sink with Christ, and rise with Christ—this is genuine affection. This was the Magdalene's love, and let it be ours!

Another sorrow afflicted her after the death of her Lord—it was the fact that the Lord was lost to her. She would have had some melancholy satisfaction if she could have found His body, but in the morning she came to the tomb and found it empty. The beloved body was gone. She wept as one utterly inconsolable. Angels spoke to her, but what were angels to her—she wanted *Him!* They would have cheered her, but she turned her back—she cared for nothing but her Lord. Those who can worship angels have not Magdalene's spirit, for she turned her back on them. For Christ she sighed. She must have Him or die. You and I may expect times when Jesus will be hidden from us. If we love Him much, we shall weep till we see Him again. They who can rejoice when Christ is absent, have little of His love in their hearts, for where the beams of the Sun of Righteousness are not at the fullest, there ought to be a winter in the soul. We should sigh and cry till our Lord withdraws the veil, crying out in our hearts, "O that I knew where I might find Him; that I might come even to His seat!

It is a fine point in Magdalene that she knew how to persevere. She continued to wait and to watch, and while John and Peter had gone home and could be satisfied without seeing Christ, she could not— she must see her Lord. The whole earth could not compose her mind nor heaven's angels give her comfort till she saw Him whom her soul loved! O heart, are you thus hungering and thirsting after Him? You shall be well satisfied; meanwhile, count it a great honor to hunger and thirst

thus, for you would not do so if you had not loved Him and received much at His hands.

V. I must conduct you one step further. This woman became **ONE OF THE MOST FAVORED BEHOLDERS OF CHRIST**, for while she sighed and wept, Jesus revealed Himself to her; and after this manner was the revelation—He called her by her name, "Mary."

It has always been thought to be a high distinction when God has called a man by his name. When he spoke and said, "Moses, Moses," then it was a sign that Moses had found favor in His sight. When Jesus said, "Mary," I can imagine that the word brought up all her history before her mind; her demoniac days, when her distracted mind was tossed on fiery billows; her happy days, when she sat at her Master's feet and caught His blessed words; the times when she had seen His miracles and wondered; when she had given Him of her substance, and been only too glad to minister unto Him. If we love Jesus much, and cannot be content without Him, we too may expect to hear Him in the secret of our soul, calling us by our name. He will say, "I have called you by your name: you are Mine." Then Mary Magdalene had such a manifestation of Christ's glory as no other woman ever had. It has been beautifully remarked by one of our dear brothers in the ministry, that that expression, "Touch Me not," shows to us that Mary had gone farther in communion than most of us ever think of going, because, she had drawn as near to Jesus as she might be allowed to go. Jesus said, "Touch Me not." You and I need not be afraid of His saying *that* to us; we do not make it necessary. We are at such a distance that He has need to say, "Come near, and nearer still"; but as for Mary, her heart was so knit to Christ, that she approached so near to Him in love, that the Lord knew she could not bear any more, and that her higher joys must be reserved for a higher sphere, and therefore He bade her pause.

Besides, He would have her know that He was her Lord and Master as well as her friend. Affection must not degenerate into familiarity—Jesus must be reverenced as well as loved. Very different was His dealing with Thomas. He commands him to touch. Thomas is such a weak thing, he *needs* that help, but Mary does not need it; her heart is knit to Him—it leaps for joy—and Jesus having given her as much joy as she could stand, stays her hand. Surely she was like good Mr. Walsh, who said when he was full of the Lord's presence, "Stop, Lord! Remember I am an earthen vessel, and if You give me more I shall die, therefore stay Your loving hand." So was it in the case of Mary. She had very near, and dear, and close communion with her Master, because she had followed Him and kept close to Him all the days of her life.

VI. Lastly, Mary became **AN HONORED MESSENGER OF CHRIST TO THE APOSTLES**.

I feel it no small privilege to be the means of bearing God's message to this congregation. It pleases me when I know that many gray-headed believers, who know far more of experimental truth than I can be supposed to know, have nevertheless been comforted by the message which my Master has sent to them by me. But what an honor to have a message for the apostles! Oh, the power of divine grace! Mary, once a demoniac, becomes a preacher to preachers! I dub her Doctor of Divinity indeed, for she has to instruct these mightiest of messengers in the faith.

Note the message. Did ever man preach a better sermon than this woman preached? Had ever minister a more weighty text than this Magdalene had to handle—"I ascend unto My Father and your Father and to My God and your God"? Angels told of the incarnation, but Magdalene told of the *ascension*. She must be made to do, alone, what a company of angels had been made to do before, to proclaim another step in the Savior's

pathway to redemption! My dear friends, you who are so low and distressed this morning, does not this history of Magdalene make you feel like Mercy in the *"Pilgrim's Progress"* who laughed in her sleep? Christiana said, "Why did you laugh?" She replied, "Because of my dream." Does not it make your heart leap to think that you—*that you* may one day teach Christ to some of the greatest of His saints; that you a poor distracted wretch on the very brink of hell, may yet see Jesus over and above what others ever see of Him, and may be able to tell angels, and principalities, and powers, what you have tasted and handled of the good Word of God? Surely this should breathe hope into you! If you have known my Master, any of you, and have been saved by Him, continue to keep close to Him. If you have known my Master, any of you, and have been saved by Him, continue to stay close to Him. If you lose His company, sigh after it, but when you find Him again, (when He finds you again), make it your delightful business to tell His brothers and sisters that He has returned to you, and make their hearts glad as the Lord Jesus has made yours. I shall leave the matter in the hands of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord raise many a Mary Magdalene in the midst of this church, for His name's sake. Amen.

793 NEARER AND DEARER – SONG. 5:2-8

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Feb. 2nd, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"I sleep, but my heart is awake: it is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, Open to me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one: for My head is filled with dew, My locks with the drops of the night. I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on again? I have washed my feet; how can I defile them? My beloved put in His hand by the latch of the door, and my heart was moved for Him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: my soul failed when He spoke: I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell Him that I am lovesick." — Song of Solomon 5:2-8

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Psalm 119:73-88; Song of Solomon 5]

THE HEALTHIEST STATE for a Christian is that of unbroken and intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. From such a state of heart he should never decline. "Abide in Me, and I in you," is the loving precept of our ever-loving Lord.

But, alas, my brothers and sisters, as in this world our bodies are subject to many sicknesses, so our souls, also, by reason of the body of this death with which we are encompassed, are often sorely afflicted with sin, sickness, and an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the Lord. We are not what we might be, we are not what we should be, we are not what we shall be, we are not what we wish to be. I fear that many of us are not walking in the light of God's countenance, are not resting with our heads upon the Savior's bosom, nor sitting with Mary at the Master's feet; we dwell in Kedar rather than Zion, and sojourn in Mesech rather than Jerusalem. Spiritual sickness is very common in the church of God, and the root of the mischief lies in distance from Jesus, following Christ afar off, and yielding to a drowsy temperament. Away from Jesus, away from joy; without the sun the flowers pine; without Jesus our hearts faint. My objective, this morning, is to put myself into the hands of the Holy Spirit, that He may now come, and, like a physician, prescribe for you, that if any of you in your hearts have become like the spouse in this part of the Song, you may as fully imitate her in that which is good as in that which is blameworthy. If you do not soon find your Beloved to your soul's joy, may you at least, like the spouse, declare that you are "lovesick," and continue to follow His track until you overtake Him.

I. Commencing where the text begins, we observe that the spouse confesses **A VERY COMMON SIN**: she cries, "I sleep."

She had no right to be asleep, for her Beloved knew no rest. He was standing outside in the cold street, with His head wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, why should she be at ease? He was anxiously seeking her, how was it that she could be so cruel as to yield to slumber? It is a most unseasonable thing, my brothers and sisters, for any of us to be indolent and indifferent, for we profess to have gone forth to

meet the Bridegroom, and it is shameful for us to sleep because He tarries for a little while. The world is perishing. We are sent into the world instrumentally to be its saviors—how dishonorable, that with such necessities for activity, and with such noble ends to be served by industry, we should fold our arms and delight ourselves in indolence! Nothing can be more inexcusable than for us to sleep, seeing that we are not of the night, nor of darkness. If we had been the children of the night, it might seem according to our nature for us to be sluggards; but we have avowed that the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has shone into our eyes, let us not therefore sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober, for they who sleep, sleep in the night; and since the night is past to us, it is highly indecent and improper that we should still continue to toss upon the bed of sloth. No time for slumber, it seems to me, can be more unseasonable to the Christian than the present one, for the world is reeking with wickedness, and superstitions like the frogs of Egypt are covering the land. Everyone who is but so much as half awake can see the enemy industriously sowing tares among the wheat. Shall the watchmen of Zion continue to slumber on their watchtowers when the foe is undermining the bulwarks? Shall the shepherds sleep when the wolf has broken into the fold? Shall the seamen sleep when the gale is furiously driving the vessel upon the rocks? So far as our own hearts are concerned, we have no private reasons for slumbering, for our daily cares require watchfulness, the temptations which assail us every hour demand of us that we should stand with our loins girt, and our abounding enemies all warn us that our danger is extreme unless we are always fully equipped in our celestial armor. If we must sleep, let it be in a less dangerous place than these hostile lands through which we march today; there will be rest enough on the other side of Jordan, where the drawn sword is exchanged for the well-tuned

harp; but to be careless now is to sleep in the midst of a bloody conflict, to dream upon the verge of a precipice, and to sport in the jaws of death. From our beds let the Master's voice awaken us, for He cries aloud, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Do you not find, my brothers and sisters, that almost unconsciously to yourselves, a spirit of indifference steals over you? You do not give up private prayer, but alas, it becomes a mere mechanical operation! You do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, but still your bodily presence is all that is given, and you derive no refreshment from the unspiritual exercise. Have you not sat at the Lord's Table spiritually asleep? Has not the heavenly watcher detected your soul nodding when the sacred emblems have been spread before you, or even in your mouth? Have you not been content with the bare symbols, which are barrenness, while the spiritual *essence*, which is marrow and fatness, you have not tasted? I find from the very fact that I am always engaged in the Master's service from the early morning till far into the night, that I become dull and carnal, being cumbered with much serving, so that I have to question the vitality of my religion because its freshness and vigor flag. It is grievous to go on like a clock which is wound up, not because you rejoice in the work, but because you must. My soul shudders at the thought of routine religion, formal service, dead devotion, mechanical godliness. What a mercy to reach the fresh springs, to feel a daily renewed youth, an anointing with fresh oil! For this I pine and pant. One gets driving on in the dark, as coachmen sometimes do when they are asleep on the box— dangerous work, this! I know that I am safe in Christ, but I would gladly suffer anything rather than become habitually of a slumbering heart. Better smart under the long whip of affliction, or feel the stings of conscience, or even the darts of the devil, than lie down in carnal security's lap

to be shorn of one's locks by the Philistines; yet I fear this has been my case. I do not know how far my confession may be echoed by my brothers today, but I am shrewdly suspicious that the more wakeful you are, the more heartily will you acknowledge a terrible tendency in the other direction. Again let me remind you that to sleep now is an evil thing, dangerous to yourselves, a cruel thing to others, an ungrateful act towards Christ, and dishonorable to His cause. Shall such a King be served by lie-a-bed soldiers? Shall His midnight pleadings be repaid by our daylight sleepiness? Shall an agony of bloody sweat be recompensed by heavy eyelids and yawning mouths? Away, forever away, O you who are redeemed by the Well-Beloved, with this detestable slumber, of which I fear you must honestly confess yourselves to have been guilty!

II. The song before us reminds us of **A HOPEFUL SIGN**. *"My heart is awake."*

What a riddle the believer is! He is asleep, and yet he is awake. His true self, the I, the veritable *Ego* of the man is asleep; but yet his heart, his truest self, his affections, are awake. The believer is a standing paradox; he cannot even understand himself. The wakefulness of the heart, does it not mean just this? "I sleep, but I am not content to be asleep"? The true believer is not satisfied to slumber. Time was when, if he could have pacified his conscience, he would have been extremely thankful, however deadly might have been the drug which caused the slumber, but now the man starts, shivers, tosses to and fro in his sleep, is tired by his rest, dreams horribly, and cries to be awakened. The saved man cannot be happy in a false and rotten peace. The divine life within struggles against the monstrous serpent of sin which tries to twist its folds of sleep around it; no renewed heart can enjoy perfect rest while conscious of being an idler in the vineyard, and a loiterer in the race. Backsliding believer, is your heart awake? If so, you will

know it, for it will smite you, it will upbraid you, and demand of you whom you are, that you should thus behave yourself! Elect of God, and yet asleep while Jesus is dishonored; redeemed by blood, and yet misspending time which belongs to your Redeemer; married to Christ, and yet absent from your Husband, and content without a smile from His dear face? How can it be? Be ashamed and be confounded, and never show your face anymore, for this is ingratitude of the deepest dye!

It is a hopeful sign when a man can conscientiously say as much as the spouse in this case, but remember it is not much to say. Do not pride yourself upon it. Be ashamed that you should be asleep at all. Do not congratulate yourself that your heart is awake. Be thankful that infinite love affords you divine grace enough to keep your heart alive, but be ashamed that you have no more when more *may* be had and *should* be had. Mere longings and moans are so small a work of grace that they should alarm rather than console. It will be a foul temptation of Satan if you are led to say, "I am content to sleep so long as my heart does but wake." Firm resolves of amendment are necessary, but something more than resolves. Alas, I need to add these few words, because the most of our resolutions vanish into thin air. We get as far as this, "I am not quite content to be in such a lukewarm state of mind, and I will therefore, by-and-by, endeavor to awaken myself, and renounce this downy bed of sloth." This is not much to say, for it is no more than we *ought* to do, it is all the less, because we so seldom keep the vow, but like the disturbed sluggard, we turn over to the other side and mutter sullenly, "A little more folding of the hands to sleep." I fear that there are thousands of God's children who are enough awake to know that they are asleep, convinced enough of their wrong to know that they are wrong, and to hope that they will one day be better, but alas,

they continue in the same unhallowed condition! May I invite every believer to make a strict examination of his own spiritual state. My brothers and sisters, you may be sleeping through great worldly prosperity, for nothing tends to slumber more surely than a gentle rocking in the cradle of luxury. On the other hand, you may be sleeping because of overwhelming sorrow, even as the eleven fell asleep when our Lord was in the garden. Some make a downy pillow of their wealth, but others fall asleep in their poverty like Jacob with a stone for his pillow. To be surrounded with constant worldly occupation, to be oppressed with many cares in business, this is to pass through the enchanted ground; and happy is the man who has grace enough to overcome the influence of his position. Now, if your heart is today sufficiently awake to tell you that you are not living as near to God as you were some years ago, that you have not the love to Him you once had, that your warmth and zeal for Christ have departed from you, I beseech you hear the voice of Jesus Christ: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." "Repent and do your first works." Turn unto your Savior now, that this very day before the sun goes down you may rejoicingly exclaim, "I have found Him whom my soul loves; I will hold Him, and will not let Him go."

III. The third thing in the text is **A LOVING CALL**.

Asleep as the spouse was, she knew her Husband's voice, for this is an abiding mark of God's people. "My sheep hear My voice." A half-sleeping saint still has spiritual discernment enough to know when Jesus speaks. At first the Beloved simply *knocked*. His objective was to enter into fellowship with His church, to reveal Himself to her, to unveil His beauties, to solace her with His presence. Such is the objective of our blessed Lord, this morning, in bringing us to this House. I hope this sermon will be a knock—I trust my discourse may give

many knocks at the door of every backsliding believer here. Jesus cries, "Open to Me! Open to Me!" Will you not admit your Savior? You love Him. He gave Himself for you, He pleads for you: let Him into your soul, commune with Him this morning. When you turn to read His word, every promise is a knock. He says, "Come and enjoy this promise with Me, for it is yes and amen in Me." Every threat is a knock. Every precept is a knock. In outward providences every benefit which we receive through our Mediator's intercession is a gentle knock from His pierced hands, saying, "Take this mercy, but open to Me! It comes to you through Me; open to Me!" Every affliction is a knock at our door; that wasting sickness, that broken bone, that consumptive daughter, that rebellious child, that burning house, that shipwrecked vessel, and dishonored bill—all these are Christ's knockings, saying, "These things are not your joys, these worldly things can afford no rest for the soles of your feet; open to Me, open to Me! These idols I am breaking, these joys I am removing; open to Me, and find in Me a solace for all your woes." Knocking, alas, seems to be of little use to us. We are so stubborn, and so ungenerous towards our heavenly Bridegroom, that He, the crucified, the immortal lover of our souls may stand and knock, and knock, and knock again, and the preacher and adversity may be His double hammer, but yet the door of the heart will not yield.

Then the Bridegroom tried his voice. If knocking would not do, he would *speak* in plain and plaintive words, "Open to me, My sister, My love, My dove, My perfect one." The Lord Jesus Christ has a sweet way of making the word come home to the conscience; I mean not, now, that effectual and irresistible power of which we shall speak by-and-by, but that lesser force which the heart may resist, but which renders it very guilty for so doing. Some of you who are the Lord's people, have heard soft and sweet whispers in your heart, saying, "You

are saved; now, My beloved, live in the light of salvation. You are a member of My mystical body, draw near and enjoy fellowship with Me, such as a member ought to have with its Head." Do you not see the Lord Jesus beckoning to you with a gentle finger, and saying, "Come with Me more often into the closet of secret prayer; get more often alone to meditate on things divine; acquire the habit of walking with Me in your business. Abide in Me, and I in you"? Do not these admonitions visit you like angels' whispers, and have you not too often resisted them? Have you not thought of them for the moment, and recorded them in your diary, and then forgotten them and lived as frigidly as you had done before, though the Sun of Righteousness was waiting to arise upon you with healing beneath His wings?

Now, beloved, observe the appeals which the Beloved here makes. He says, "Open to Me," and His plea is the love the spouse has to Him, or professes to have, the love He has to her, and the relationship which exists between them. "Open to Me, My *sister*. Next akin to Me, bone of My bone, flesh of My flesh, born of the same mother"; for Jesus is "the seed of the woman," even as we are. One with us in our humanity, He takes each human heart that believes to be His mother, and sister and brother. "Open to Me, My sister." If you are so nearly related to Jesus, why do you act so coldly towards Him? If, indeed, He is your closest Kinsman, how is it that you live so far remote, and come not to visit Him, neither open the doors of your heart to entertain Him? *"My dove,* My gentle one, My favorite, My innocent." Oh, if you are indeed His dove, how can you rest away from the dovecote? How can you be satisfied without your Mate? One turtledove pines without the other, how is it you do not pine to have fellowship with the dear Husband of your soul? *"My love,"* Jesus calls us what we profess to be. We say we love Him; yes, and unless we have been dreadfully

deceived, we do love Him. It brings the tears to my eyes to think that I should so often be indifferent to Him, and yet I can say it as before Him, "You know all things, You know that I love You." brothers and sisters, if we love Him, let us crave His presence in our souls! How miserable must it be to live as some do day after day, without a real soul-stirring Heaven-moving prayer. Are there not some who continue week after week without searching the word, and without rejoicing in the Lord? Oh, wretched life of banishment from bliss!

Dear hearer, can you be satisfied to go forth into the world, and to be so occupied with it, that you never have a desire towards Heaven? If so, mourn over such backsliding, since it exiles you from your Best beloved's bosom! The bridegroom adds another title, *"My perfect one."* There is a spiritual chastity which every believer must maintain; our heart belongs to no one but Christ. All other lovers must be gone; He fills the Throne. He has bought us; no other paid a part of the price; He shall have us altogether. He has taken us into personal union with Himself; of His mystical body we make up a part; we ought, therefore, to hold ourselves as chaste virgins unto Christ, undefiled with the pollutions of the flesh and the rivalries of earthly loves. To the perfect one, Jesus says, "Open to Me." Oh, I am ashamed, this morning, to be preaching from such a text, ashamed of myself most of all, that I should need to have such a text applied to my own soul. Why, beloved, if Christ deigns to enter into such a poor miserable cottage as our nature is, ought we not to entertain the King with the best we have, and feel that the first seat at our table is all too poor for Him? What if in the midst of this dark night our beloved comes to us who profess to love Him, shall He have to knock and speak and plead by every sweet and endearing title, and yet shall we refuse to arise and give Him the fellowship He craves?

Did you notice that powerful argument with which the heavenly lover closed His cry? He said, "My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night." Ah, sorrowful remembrances, for those drops were not the ordinary dew that fall upon the houseless traveler's unprotected head, His head was wet with scarlet dew, and His locks with crimson drops of a tenfold night of God's desertion, when He "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." My Heart, how vile you are, for you shut out the crucified! Behold the Man, crowned with thorns and scourged, with traces of the spit of the soldiers, can you close the door on Him? Will you despise the "despised and rejected of men"? Will you grieve the "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief"? Do you forget that He suffered all this for you, for you, when you deserve nothing at His hands? After all this, will you give Him no recompense, not even the poor return of admission to your loving fellowship?

I am afraid some of you believers think it a very small thing to live a day or two without fellowship with God in prayer. Probably you have fallen into such a sleepy state that you can read your Bible without enjoyment, and yet you do not feel it to be any very remarkable thing that it is so. You come to and fro to the Tabernacle and listen to the gospel, and it does not come home to you with the power it once had, and yet you do not feel at all alarmed about it. My Master does not treat your state of mind with the same indifference that you do, for it causes Him pain, and though as Mediator His expiatory griefs are finished once and for all, yet He has anguish still over your indifference and coldness of heart; these sorrows are the drops that wet His head, these are the dewdrops that hung about His raven locks. O will you grieve Him? Will you open all His wounds and crucify Him afresh? Will you put Him to open shame? Doors of the heart, fly open! Though rusted upon your

hinges, open at the coming of the sorrowful lover who was smitten of God and afflicted! Surely the argument of His grief should prevail instantly with every honest heart: He whose head is wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night, must not be kept standing in the street—it behooves us that He be entertained with our warmest love, it is imperative that He is housed at once.

IV. Yet the spouse hastened not to open the door, and I am afraid the like delay may be charged upon some of us. Our shame deepens as we pursue our theme, and think how well our own character is photographed here by the wise man; for notice, in the fourth place, that after the knocking and the pleading, the spouse made **A MOST UNGENEROUS EXCUSE**.

She sat like a queen, and knew no sorrow. She had taken off her robe and washed her feet as travelers do in the East before they go to rest. She was taking her ease in full security, and therefore she said to her beloved, "I have taken off my robe, how can I put it on again? As for my feet, I have washed them, and to tread the floor to open the door would defile them; therefore, I pray You have me excused." A bad excuse was in this case far worse than none, because it was making one sin an apology for another. Why did she take off her robe? The Bridegroom had not come; she should have stood with her loins girt about, and her lamp trimmed. Why had she washed her feet? It was right to do so if the emblem had indicated purity, but it indicated carnal ease. She had left holy labor for carnal rest. Why did she do these things? She thus makes her wicked slumber and inaction to be an excuse for barring out her Husband. My dear brothers and sisters, there is a temptation which is very cunning on the part of Satan, and perhaps he will exercise that upon some of you this morning. While I have been preaching, you have said, "Well, that is just like me. The text fully opens up my experience"; and then the

devil will say, "Be satisfied; you see you are in the same condition as the spouse was, therefore it is all right." Oh, damnable temptation! What can be viler than this, that because another has sinned against the Beloved, I am to be content to sin in the same way! Perhaps you will turn this sad course of conduct in the ancient spouse into an excuse for your own negligence. Shall I English the excuse she made? It is this—"O Lord, I know that if I am to enter into much fellowship with You, I must pray very differently from what I have done of late, but it is too much trouble; I cannot stir myself to energy so great. My time is so taken up with my business, I am so constantly engaged that I could not afford even a quarter of an hour for retirement. I have to cut my prayers short." Is this in part the miserable excuse? Shall I go on? Shall I expose more of this dishonorable apology? It is this—"I do not want to begin an examination of myself: it may reveal so many unpleasant truths. I sleep, and it is very comfortable to sleep; I do not want to be driven out of my comforts. Perhaps if I were to live nearer to Christ, I would have to give up some of the things which I so much enjoy. I have become conformed to the world of late; I am very fond of having Mr. So-and-So to spend an hour with me in the evening, and his talk is anything but that which my Master would approve of, but I cannot give him up. I have taken to read religious novels. I could not expect to have the Lord Jesus Christ's company when I am poring over such trash as that, but still I prefer it to my Bible; I would sooner read a fool's tale than I would read of Jesus' love." How ashamed I feel this morning, to have to put into words like these, the sins of some of you, but my words are literal truth. Do not many of you live as if you had a name to live, and were dead? Jesus Christ comes, and knocks this morning, and reminds you that the happiest life is living near to Him, that the holiest, purest, sweetest hours you ever had were those in

which you threw yourselves upon Him, and gave up all besides. He reminds you of your better days, O do not, I pray you, offer Him frivolous and vexatious excuses O despise not your Lord who died for you, in whose name you live, with whom you hope to reign forever, who is to wrap you about with glory in the day of His appearing! Let it not be said that He is pushed into a corner, and His love despised, while the vile painted-faced world takes up the love of your life! It should not be so; it is baseness itself on our part when it is so.

Still as a wonder of wonders, although shamefully and cruelly treated, the beloved Husband did not go away. We are told that He "put His hand by the hole of the door," and then the heart of His spouse was moved for Him. In the Eastern door there is generally a place near the lock into which a man may put his hand, and there is a pin inside which, if removed, unfastens the door. Each one of these locks is different from another, so that no one usually understands how to open the door except the master. So the Master in this case did not actually open the door—you notice the spouse did that, but He pulled out the pin, so that she could see His hand, she could see that the door was not fast closed now He had removed the bar. "My Beloved put His hand by the latch of the door." Does not this picture **THE WORK OF EFFECTUAL GRACE**, when the truth of God does not appeal to the ear alone, but comes to the heart, when it is no longer a thing thought on, and discussed and forgotten, but an arrow which has penetrated into the soul, and sticks fast in the loins to our wounding—and ultimately to our spiritual healing? No hand is like Christ's hand. When He puts His hand to the work it is well done. He "put *in* His hand"—not His hand on me to smite me, but His hand in me to comfort me, to sanctify me. He put in His hand, and straightway His beloved began to pity Him, and to lament her unkindness. She thought as she looked at that hand pierced

with the nail mark, "O Jesus, have I no love for You? Have You done all this for me, and have I been a transparent hypocrite after all, and locked You out when I ought to have admitted You? I have used no other friend so badly. I would have been ashamed to have thought of such conduct even to a foe. But You, O You who have done more for me than mother, brother, husband, friend, could have done, to You I have been an ingrate most base and willful." Her heart was moved with repentance; her eyes gushed with tears, and she rose to let Him in.

As she arose she first put on her robe, and then she searched for the alabaster box of precious ointment, that she might anoint His weary feet and dewy locks; no sooner did she reach the door, than she noticed the love of God to her! Her "hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet smelling myrrh"; here is the Holy Spirit come to help our infirmities. She begins to pray, and the Holy Spirit helps her. She begins already to enjoy the sweetness, not of communion, but of the very desire after communion. For, beloved, when our tears begin to flow because we are far from Christ, those holy drops have myrrh in them. When we begin to pray for divine grace, there is blessedness even about our yearning, and longings, and sighs, and panting, and pining; our fingers drop with sweet smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. An unction from the Holy One descends upon the soul when it is earnestly seeking for its Beloved. But that ought never to satisfy us. Behold another temptation of the devil. He will say to you, "On this very morning you felt some sweetness in hearing about Christ, your hands have evidently dropped with myrrh upon the handles of the lock." Yes, but still it is not the myrrh that will content the loving heart, it is Christ she needs; and if not only hands, but lips and feet and her whole frame had dropped with myrrh, this would never have contented her until

she could get the Lord Himself. I pray you, beloved, if the life of Jesus is in you of a truth, rest not satisfied with all the graces and the promises and the doctrines and the gifts of the Spirit of God, but seek after this most excellent gift—to *know* Christ, and to be found in Him, to say of Him, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me"; and, yet more, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand does embrace me." It was that effectually putting in of the hand of Christ that moved her. O Lord, grant the like unto us!

VI. But now, in the sixth place, observe **THE DESERVED CHASTISEMENT** which the Bridegroom inflicted. When He was willing to commune, she was not; and now that she is willing, and even anxious, what happens? I wish to describe this to you because some of you may have felt it, and others of you who never have, but have preserved your intimacy with Christ up till now, may be warned by it. The newly awakened one went to the door and opened it to her beloved, for though He was gone, she did not doubt of her love to Him, nor of His love to her. "I opened to my beloved, but," says the Hebrew, "He had gone, He had gone." The voice of lamentation; the reduplicated cry of one who is in bitter distress; there must have been a sad relief about it to her sinful heart, for she must have felt afraid to look her dear one in the face after such heartless conduct; but sad as it would have been to face Him, it was infinitely sadder to say, "He is gone, He is gone." Now she begins to use the means of grace in order to find Him. "I sought Him," she said, "and I found Him not. I went up to the house of God; the sermon was sweet, but it was not sweet to me, for He was not there. I went to the communion table, and the ordinance was a feast of fat things to others, but not to me, for *He* was not there. I sought Him, but I could not find Him." Then she began to pray. She had neglected that before, but now she supplicated in real earnest, "I called Him; I said to Him, Come,

my Beloved, my heart wakes for You. Jesus, reveal Yourself to me as You do not to the world"—

"I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The sweetness of redeeming love,
Your love, O Christ, to me."

Her prayers were many; she kept them up by day and by night. "I called Him, but He gave me no answer." She was not a lost soul—do not think that! Christ loved her just us much then as before, no, loved her a great deal more. If there can be any change in Christ's love, He must have much more approved of her when she was seeking Him in sorrow, than when she was reclining upon the conch and neglecting Him. But He was gone, and all her calling could not bring Him back.

What did she do then? Why, she went to His ministers, she went to those who were the watchmen of the night, and what did they say to her? Did they cheer her? Perhaps they had never passed through her experience; perhaps they were mere hirelings. However it might be, they struck her. Sometimes the truthful preaching of the gospel will smite a child of God when he gets out of his walk with God, and it is right it should be so. But they did more than strike, they "wounded" her until she began to bleed from the wounds given by the very men whom she hoped would have comforted her. "Surely," she might have said, "you know where the city's King is, for you are the city's guards!" But she received no comfort. When a poor soul in this case flies to an unsympathizing minister, he will say, "Well, you say you have lost the presence of Christ; you should bestir yourself to find it." "Yes," says the spouse, "I rose up and opened to Him." "You should use the means." "But I have used the means; I sought Him, but I found Him not." "You should pray." "I did pray; I called Him, but He gave me no

answer." "Well then," perhaps they will add, "you should wait patiently for Him." "Oh, but," she says, "I cannot, I must have Him now! I am lovesick." And then perhaps the minister will be sharp, and say, "I fear you are not a child of God." Now what is that? Why, that is taking away the veil from the mourning seeker; that is plucking away the ensign of sincerity from the seeker! No woman went into the streets of Jerusalem without her veil, unless she was of the baser sort, and the watchmen seemed to say to this woman, "You are of ill repute, or you would not be here at this time of night crying out for one you have lost." Oh, cruel work to pull off her veil and expose her, when she was already wretched enough! Sometimes a sharp sentence from a true minister may set a poor soul in the stocks who ought rather to have been comforted. I hope these hands will never pull away the veil from any of you poor mourning lovers of Christ. Far rather would these lips tell Him when I speak with Him, that you are lovesick! But it cannot be helped at all times, for when we are dealing with the hypocrite, the tender child of God thinks we mean him; when we are speaking against the formalist, as we must do, the genuine believer writes bitter things against himself. When the fan is in our hand, and we are seeking to thoroughly purge the floor, it sometimes happens that some of the lighter wheat gets blown a little away with the chaff, and so distress is brought to weak but real children of God. If so, remember it is not our fault, for we would not grieve you; but it is your fault for having lost your beloved, for if you had not lost Him, you would not have been saying, "Tell me where I shall find Him!" You would have been rejoicing in Him, and no watchmen would have struck you, and no keepers of the walls would have taken away your veil, for Jesus would have been your Protector and your Friend.

VII. Now, to close. As the poor spouse did not then find Christ, but was repulsed in all ways, she adopted **A LAST**

EXPEDIENT. She knew that there were some who had daily fellowship with the King, daughters of Jerusalem who often saw Him, and therefore she sent a message by them, "If you see my Beloved, tell Him that I am lovesick."

Enlist your brothers and sisters to pray for you. Go with them to their gatherings for prayer. Their company will not satisfy you without Jesus, but their company may help you find Jesus. Follow the footsteps of the flock, and you may by-and-by find the Shepherd. And what a message it is to send to Christ! Do not send it by other people's lips only, send it by your own. Tell Him, "I am lovesick." This is of all things the most painful, and the happiest thing in the entire world. This is a sickness that I should like to die of, but I should like to feel it in rather a different shape from this. There are two lovesicknesses in Solomon's Song. The one is when the spouse longs for the presence of her Lord, and the second is when she gets that presence—He is so glorious to her, that she is ready to die with excessive joy, and she exclaims, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am lovesick." If you cannot get the second, remember that the first is the clear way to it. Resolve in your heart, my brothers and sisters, that you will never be happy till you win the face of Christ! Settle it in your soul that there shall be no end to your cries and tears till you can say with all your heart, "My beloved is near to me; I can speak to Him; I am in the enjoyment of His love." If you can be content without it you shall go without it, but if you must have it you shall have it. If your hunger will break through stone walls to reach your Lord, no stone walls shall keep Him from you. If you are insatiable after Christ, He will feed you with Himself. If you bid goodbye to all the dainties of the world, and all its sweet draughts and its delicacies, and must have Christ and Christ alone, then no hungering soul shall long be kept without Him. He *will* come to you. There are cords that draw Him to you at

this hour. His love draws you to Him, but your love draws Him close to you. Be not afraid, your soul shall be like the chariots of Amminadab; perhaps even this morning, and you shall go your way rejoicing! The Lord grant it may be so for His love's sake. Amen.

794 JESUS AND THE LAMBS – ISA. 40:11

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Feb. 9th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." — Isaiah 40:11

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Isaiah 40]

IN THE CHAPTER before us, our Savior is described as Jehovah God. He is spoken of as clothed with irresistible power: "He shall come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him"; but, as if to soften a glory far too bright for the weak eyes of the trembling, the prophet introduces the delightful words of the text: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Here is divinity; not Jehovah the man of War, but Jehovah the Shepherd of Israel. Here is the fire of deity, but its gentle, warming influence is felt, and the consuming force is veiled. Greatness in league with gentleness, and power linked with affection, now pass before us. Loving-kindness and tender mercy are drawn in their golden chariot by the noble steeds of omnipotence and wisdom. Heroes who have been most distinguished for fury in the fight, have been tender of heart as little children; sharp were their swords to the foe, but their hands are gentle towards the weak. It is the index of a noble

nature that it can be majestic as a lion in the midst of the fray, and roar like a young lion on the scene of conflict, and yet have a dove's eye and a maiden's heart. Such is our Lord Jesus Christ; He is the conquering Captain of salvation, but He is meek and lowly of heart.

This morning, in considering the text, we have a special eye to these who are the weaklings among us. Our desire is, as an under-shepherd, to administer consolation to those who are distressed in spirit and feeble in mind, hoping that while we speak, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, may speak effectually to them.

I. Our first consideration, this morning, will be the inquiry, **WHO ARE THE LAMBS WHICH OUR BLESSED LORD IS SAID TO GATHER AND TO CARRY IN HIS BOSOM?**

In a certain sense we may affirm that *all His people are lambs.* In as far as they exhibit the Christian spirit, they are lamb-like. Jesus sends them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. They are a little flock, a guileless people. Just as the lamb was clean and acceptable to God, so is every Christian. As the lamb might be presented in sacrifice, so does every believer present his body as a living sacrifice unto God. As the lamb was the symbol of innocence, so should the believer be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and as the lamb fights not, and has no weapon of offense, so the believer is no brawler, striker, or man of strife. Wars and fights he hates, and follows peace with all men. When he is fully conformed to his Master's will, he resists not evil, but is patient, turning the other cheek when he is struck; he knows that vengeance is God's prerogative, and therefore is slow to retort upon a railing adversary, remembering that Michael the Archangel only replied to the adversary, "The Lord rebuke you." A lamb is so guileless and unsuspicious that it licks the butcher's hand, and those who seek to destroy it, find it easy work. So have the

saints been killed all the day long—they are accounted as sheep for the slaughter; and the accusation of James is true—"You have condemned and killed the just, and he does not resist you." Those who are of a meek and lamb-like spirit are precisely such as become lovers of the gentle Prophet of Nazareth. Like attracts its like. He is meek and lowly in heart, and therefore those who are like He is, come to Him. The power of His gospel, wherever it is exerted, produces men of such character. Those who came to Christ, when He was upon earth, may have been boisterous enough in their natural dispositions, but after they had received the baptism of His Spirit, they were an inoffensive race. They proclaimed the gospel with boldness, and for their Master they were very valiant, but they rose not in arms against Caesar; they headed no rebellions; they were not competitors in the race for power; they shed no blood even to win their liberties; they were examples of suffering, affliction and of patience—they were ready to live or to die for the truth, but that truth was love to God and man. Self-pride, greed, wrath as works of the old nature, they sought to mortify, and it was their daily desire to do good unto all men as they had opportunity. Jesus will always gather such lambs. The world hates them and scatters them, the world ridicules and despises them, but Jesus makes them His bosom friends. The world of old hounded them to death, made them pine in the damps of the catacombs of Rome, or perish among the snows of the Alps, but their glorified Lord gathered them by tens of thousands from the prison, the amphitheater, the stake, the bloody scaffold, and in His blessed bosom they rest in congenial company, forever as the Lord's lambs are they glorified with the Lamb of God.

Still, this is not the precise meaning of the text. The word "lamb" frequently signifies the *young*, and our Lord Jesus Christ graciously receives many young persons into His bosom. The

ancient teachers of the Jewish law invited no children to gather around them; I suppose there was not a Rabbi in all Jerusalem who would have desired a child to listen to him, and if it had been said of anyone of the Sanhedrim, "that man teaches so as to be understood by a child," he would have thought himself insulted by such a description. But not so our Master! He always had children among His audience— they are often mentioned; in the enumeration of those whom He miraculously fed, we read, "besides women and children." His triumphant entry into Jerusalem included among the most conspicuous of the jubilant throng those children who were heard crying, "Hosanna," in the temple. When Jesus took a little child, and set him in the midst, He had not to go far for the living illustration, for the little children were always near "the holy child Jesus," the great child-man. Our Lord Jesus was so guileless, so gentle; He wore His heart so manifestly upon His sleeve, that though a man in all things masculine and dignified, the childlike nature was eminently conspicuous in Him, and attracted the little ones to itself. We shall never forget the voice of the blessed Savior, the Lord of angels, as He cries, "Allow the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Some in our day mistrust youthful piety, but our Savior lends no countenance to such suspicions. Some cautiously whisper, "Let the pious youth be tried awhile before we believe in his religion; let him be tempted; let him bear the frosts of the world, perhaps the blossoms will drop away and disappoint us." Such was not my Master's way. Cautious, no doubt He was, prudent beyond all human wisdom, but yet always full of love and generousness, and therefore we find Him receiving children, as He has received us, into His kingdom— into the best place in His kingdom—into His loving bosom. Ah, dear children, since you are not too young to die, and to be judged for your idle words

and disobedient actions, it is a delightful thing for you that you are not too young to believe in Jesus, nor too young to be saved by His grace! Dear children, I would have you completely saved today, for your tender age is no hindrance to you being forgiven and justified. If you have trusted the great Savior, I tenderly invite you to declare your faith in the Lord Jesus, and to come forward and be joined to the church of Jesus. If indeed you are converted, we dare not refuse you. I hope the church of Jesus will no more think of refusing you than would our Lord Himself. Were Jesus here this morning, He would say, "Allow the little ones to come to Me," and I hope you will be led by the Holy Spirit to come at His call. Only let your youthful hearts be given to Jesus, let your confidence be fixed alone upon what He suffered for sinners upon the cross of Calvary, and you need not be afraid. There is the same Christ for you as for the gray heads. The promises are as much yours as your father's, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit shall flow as sweetly into the little vessels of your hearts as into the hearts of those who have known the Savior these 50 years. Hear the words of the Good Shepherd, "I love them who love Me, and they who seek Me early shall find Me."

But, again, by lambs we may quite as properly understand *young converts*, those who begin to have religious impressions, those who but of late have repented of sin, and been driven from all confidence in their own good works. They are not yet established in the faith; they only know, perhaps, one or two great doctrines; they are very far from being able to teach others; they need to sit at the feet of Jesus rather than to serve Him in activities requiring talent and knowledge. Their faith is very apt to waver. Poor things, if they are assailed by arguments they are soon perplexed, and though they cling to the truth of God, yet it is a hard struggle for them; they cannot give a reason for the hope that is in them, though they are not deficient in meekness

and fear. Our Lord Jesus Christ never discarded a single follower on account of his being juvenile in the faith. Far from it! He has been pleased, in His infinite tenderness, to look especially after these. A young man came to Him who was not then converted—probably never was—and yet though the good work in him was so immature, that it may have been compared to the morning cloud and the morning dew which pass away, yet our Savior, looking upon him, *loved* him; for He delights to see the hopeful token, however slender; He quenches not the smoking flax, and breaks not the bruised reed. He did not repulse the self-righteous youth. He was ignorant of the very first principle of the gospel, namely, justification by faith and not by works, yet, since he desired to do right, and was evidently sincere, our Lord Jesus Christ further instructed Him. I earnestly pray Christians to imitate my Master in this. Where you see anything of Christ, encourage it. You may observe much that you lament, but, I pray you, do not kill the child because its face is dirty; do not cut down the trees because in spring they have no fruit upon them. Be thankful that they make a show of buds which may come to fruit byand- by. It is not policy in the Christian church to be severe upon those who are in *any* measure inclined towards Christ! It is inhumanity, it is worse cruelty than the sea monsters, for even they draw out the breasts to their young; but some men seem determined to crush all the hopes of the babes in divine grace. Because they grow not at once to the full stature of men, therefore they say, "Away with them! They are not fit to be received into the church of Christ." My dear friends, if there are any of you weak and doubtful, just struggling into the divine Life, who have only for the last few days known anything at all concerning the love of Christ, if there are in you any good thing towards the Lord God of Israel—a desire, an earnest longing, or a little faith—

my Master will not be unkind to you, for "He gathers the lambs in His arm, and carries them in His bosom."

Furthermore, we feel sure that we shall not strain the text if we say that the lambs in the flock are *those who are naturally of a weak, timid, trembling disposition.* There are many persons who, if they were kept constantly in the hothouse of Christian encouragement, would still feel themselves frostbitten, for their minds are naturally heavy and forlorn. If they make music at all, they dwell evermore upon the bass, and keep not their harps long from the willows. When the promise comes with power to their souls and they enjoy a few bright sunshiny days, they are very happy in their own quiet way, like the man in the valley of humiliation, singing, "He who is down need fear no fall," but they never climb the mountains of joy, or lift up their voice with exultation. They have a humble hope and a gracious reliance, and they are often in practical Christianity among the best in the church, and yet, alas for them, their days of mirth are few; like the elder brother in the parable, their father has never given them a kid that they may make merry with their friends. Now, such persons make but poor company, and yet every Christian ought to seek their society, for there is something to be learned from them; and, moreover, their needs demand our sympathetic attention. Do not think that Jesus seeks out the strong saints to be His companions to the neglect of the little ones. Ah, no! "He shall gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom."

Once more, the lambs are *those who know but little of the things of God.* This class is not so much desponding as ignorant, ignorant after a world of teaching. When we meet with persons who do not understand the doctrines of grace, after we have done our best to instruct them, we must not feel vexed with them; but reflect that our Master said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?"

He was a much better teacher than we shall ever be, and therefore if He was gentle with His dull scholars, we must not be harsh. Some believers, after years of scriptural teaching, get nothing into their heads except a mass of confusion; they are in a fog, poor souls; they mean right enough, but they do not know how to put their meaning in order. Oftentimes you will find our friends confounding things that differ, mingling justification with sanctification, or the fruits of the Spirit with the foundation of their confidence; this is the result of an uneducated understanding. Such persons are to be pitied, because they become very readily the victims of designing men, who lead them into error. But they are not to be shunned; they are not to be scolded; they are not to be denounced. Proud men may do so, for they are short-tempered, but the large-hearted Son of God declares that to them He will act as a shepherd, and will gather them in His arms. If Thomas will not learn by any other means, Jesus will condescend to his childish weaknesses, and let him put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into the wounded side; for, as a nurse is tender with her children, and as a good schoolmaster will teach his child the same thing 20 times if he has not learnt it at the 19th lesson, so Jesus will do; adding line upon line, and precept upon precept—here a little, and there a little—that we may be nurtured and nourished in the faith once delivered to the saints.

To whichever class any of you may belong, let my text be sweet to your taste, and may the Holy Spirit cheer you by it.

II. But we must now pass on. **HOW DOES JESUS SHOW THIS SPECIAL CARE FOR THE WEAK ONES?** He does this, according to the text, in two ways.

First, by *gathering* them at the season of the year when the little lambs are born. It is interesting to observe the shepherd's careful watch. When he finds the little ones in the cold frost, almost ready to die, how tender he is! Why, the shepherd's

kitchen fireside is, for a time, the lamb's own nursery. Wife and children are put aside for a while, and the warm place is all given up to the little lambs; there they lie in the warmth, till they have strength enough to return to their mothers. So when a man is spiritually born unto God, he is frequently so desponding, his faith is so weak, and he is altogether so ready to die, that he needs the tender mercy from on high to visit him. There may be someone here who has been converted to God during the last week, but no kind Christian knows of it; nobody has spoken to him to gather him up; but, lonely one, be not dismayed, Jesus will come to you; He will be a present Help in this, your hour of trouble. Now that you are like a new lit candle which is easily blown out, He will shield you from the breath of evil.

When the flock is on the march, it will happen, unless the shepherd is very watchful, that the lambs will lag behind. Those great Syrian flocks which feed in the plains of Palestine, have to be driven many miles because the grass is scant, and the flocks are numerous, and in long journeys the lambs drop one by one for weariness, and then the shepherds carry them. So it is in the progress of the great Christian church; persecuted often, always more or less molested by the outside world, there are some who lag— they cannot keep up the pace—the spiritual warfare is too severe for them. They love their Lord; they would, if they could, be among the foremost; but, through the cares of this world, through weakness of mind, through a lack of spiritual vigor. They become lame and are ready to perish; such faint hearts are the peculiar care of their tender Lord.

At other times, the lambs do worse than this. They are of a skittish nature, and feeling the natural vigor of new-born life, they are not content to keep within bounds as the older sheep do, but they betake themselves to wandering, so that at the

close of the day the lambs cost the shepherd much trouble. "Where are those lambs?" he says. "Where are they? The sheep are right enough, but where are the lambs?" What will the good man do? Leave them, and say, "They have worn out my patience"? No—he will gather them. So are there many immature Christians, whose minds are hung loosely, and are unstable as water. What a trouble some of you are to those who love you! When you rise to a little faith, you sink into unbelief before the next day. You shift your opinions as often as the moon changes, and are of one mind never longer than a week. You follow everybody who chooses to put up his finger to beckon you away; you leave the good old paths to seek other pastures. Sometimes you are with the socalled brethren; the next day the Church of England; next, the Dissenters, and, perhaps, if the Roman Catholics were to try you, you would be ready to go with them in the hope of finding comfort. It is the nature of the lambs that they should do so. But will the Good Shepherd be angry with you, and cast you off? Not at all, for Jesus gathers the lambs, and when He puts His great loving arm over them, they cannot wander anymore; when His love constrains them, and they come to the full enjoyment of His gospel truth, then they are content to remain near His blessed person.

When the text says, "He gathers the lambs," does it mean that Jesus gathers poor tremblers to His precious blood, and washes them and gives them peace? Does it mean that He gathers them to His precious truth, and illuminates their minds, and instructs their understanding? Is it not meant He gathers them to Himself and unites them to His glorious person, making them members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones? Oh, this is a delightful gathering! His word cannot do it alone, His ministers cannot do it, but *His arm* can; the power and energy of the Holy Spirit, which is like the right arm of the

Good Shepherd, gathers together these weakest and most wandering ones, and puts them safe into the blessed pavilion of His bosom.

But the text says, after He gathers them, He *carries them in His bosom.* That is, first of all, *the safest place,* for the wolf cannot get them there. Furious and impertinent as hell always is, yet who can hope to take His bosom treasure away from Jesus? You weak ones, how secure you are in Him, though so exposed to danger in yourselves. The bosom; why that is the *tenderest place; it is* where we should put only a poor creature that has a broken bone and could not bear to be roughly touched.

The bosom, that is *the easiest place;* it makes one wish to always be a lamb, if one could always ride in that chariot. Delightful is the weakness which casts us upon such gracious strength. "He carries the lambs in His bosom." Why, that is *the most honorable place.* We would not put into our bosom that which we despised. We would not think of carrying there anything which was not choice and dear, and exceedingly precious. So, you weak ones, though you think yourself to be less than nothing, and are nothing in yourself, yet you shall have all the security which the heart of Deity can give you, all the comfort that the love of Christ can pour upon you, all the honor and dignity which divine nearness, and fellowship, and dearness of His love can bestow upon a poor mortal. Rejoice, you lambs, that you have such a Shepherd to carry you near His heart!

To enlarge upon this, let me observe that our Lord shows His care for the lambs *in His teachings* which are very simple, mostly in parables, full of winning illustrations, but always plain. The gospel is a poor man's gospel. You need not be a Plato, or a Socrates to understand it; the peasant is as readily saved as the philosopher. He who has but a small amount of brains may understand that Jesus Christ came into the world to save

sinners, and that whoever believes in Him is not condemned. If Christ had not cared for the weak ones, He would not have come with so plain a message, for He comprehends all mysteries, and knows the deep things of God.

Moreover, He is pleased *to reveal His teachings gradually*. He did not tell His disciples all the truths of God at once, because they were not able to bear it. He led them from one truth to another. He brings forth milk before He offers strong meat. Some of you weak ones are very stupid; you want to begin with the hard truths first; you long to comprehend election before you understand that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; but you should not do so, for our Lord would have you begin with these lessons, "I am a sinner: Christ stood in the sinner's place: I trust Him, I am saved." After you have learned this first alphabet of the gospel you shall learn the rest. It is a token of the Lord's love to the weak, that He does not hang our salvation upon *our* understanding mysteries; He does not rest our ground of confidence upon our orthodoxy, or our knowledge of the more sublime truths of God, but if we know the power of His precious blood—whether we understand His electing love or not—we are saved. It is well to learn all that we can, but here is a fair display of Christ's love, that if we do but trust in Him, although we may be much in the dark, we are nevertheless secure.

The Lord's gentleness to the lambs is shown in this that *His experimental teachings are all by degrees too*. He does not teach the young beginner all the depravity of his heart which he will have to feel in later life; He does not allow the young convert to be molested by Satanic insinuations, as he may be when he becomes stronger; nor does He usually allow temporal trouble to befall so heavily on those who are but fledglings in the nest. He always suits the trial to the strength, and the burden to the back. I am quite certain if my Master had allotted me some of

my present trials 15 years ago, I would have been ready to despair, and yet at the present I am supplied with strength enough to bear them, though I have none to spare. Blessed be the Lord Jesus for His kind consideration of our many infirmities. He never overdrives His lambs. Though a certain form of experience is very useful, yet He does not send it to us while by reason of backwardness in grace we are unable to bear it.

The divine gentleness of our Master has been shown *in the solemn curses with which He effectually guarded the little ones.* Observe how sharp they are! "But whoso shall offend one of those little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." To offend is to put a stumbling block in the way. How solemn is that warning, "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones!" He must have loved them, or He would not have set such a hedge of fire around them!

How many of *the promises are made on purpose for the weak.* I encourage you to make your own study of them, and so I shall not repeat them this morning. The precious word of God will show you how the gracious word is framed to the peculiar condition of distress and weakness under which the lambs are suffering. The Holy Spirit, with divine art, brings home to the heart promises which had never else appeared to be so full of grace.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ's tenderness to His people is further shown in this, that *what He requires of them is easy.* "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." He does not command the babes to preach; He does not send the weak believers to the forefront of the battle, as David did Uriah, that they may be slain; He gives them no other burden than this—that they will trust Him, and give Him all their heart. A yoke, how easy!

He shows His gentleness, moreover, in that *He accepts the least service that these little ones may offer.* A faint prayer, a sigh, a tear—He will receive all these as much as the most eloquent pleadings of an Elijah. The broken alabaster box, and the ointment poured out shall be received though they come from one who has no former character with which to back the gift; and the two mites that make a farthing shall not be turned down. The best work sincerely done out of love to Jesus—in dependence upon Him—He accepts most cheerfully, and thus shows to us His real tenderness for the lambs. He has bid His ministers to be careful of the little ones; "Feed My lambs," He said to Peter, because He would have all His ministers do so. Those shall find themselves winning their Master's frown who despise the weaklings, but those shall have a smile from His face who, with tender care, shall nurture them. Jesus, my Lord, speaks to the desponding and timid ones this morning, and He cries—

"Trust Me, and fear not; your life is secure;
My wisdom is perfect, supreme is
My power; In love I correct you, your soul to refine,
To make you at length in My likeness to shine.
The foolish, the fearful, the weak are My care,
The helpless, the homeless, I hear their sad prayer:
From all their afflictions My glory shall spring,
And the deeper their sorrows, the louder they'll sing."

I have thus shown to you, as well as I am able, the tender heart of my Lord towards the lambs.

III. In the third place, let us answer this question, **WHY THIS CARE OF CHRIST TOWARDS THE LAMBS OF THE FLOCK?** The answer is, because they need it, and He loves them, and therefore shall they receive according to their necessities.

But why is He so particularly anxious to comfort them? Surely if He lost a lamb or two, it would be no loss among so many, and if one of the feeble minds should perish, it would be no great consequence when a multitude that no man can number shall be saved! The answer is plain—*the weak are as much redeemed by the blood of Christ as the strong.* When the redemption money was paid by the Jews, it was said, "The rich shall give no more, and the poor shall give no less, because every man's soul is of equal value before the eternal God." The meanest child of God has been as truly bought with the blood of Christ, and cost the Lord as much to buy him as the brightest of apostles, or the boldest of confessors! A man will not lose a thing which cost him his blood. The soul of a beggar, if it were put into the scale, would outweigh ten thousand worlds—and when that beggar's soul has been redeemed by the wounds of Jesus, depend upon it, Jesus Christ will not lose it.

In the newborn child of God *there are peculiar beauties* which are not so apparent in others. It is a matter of taste, I suppose, which is the more beautiful, the lamb or the sheep; but I think the most of us would select the lamb. There is a charm in young creatures, and so there are traits of character in weak and young believers which are extremely delightful. You miss in later life the first love of the beginner in the heavenly pilgrimage. True, there are other and more substantial beauties, but the first blushes and smiles are gone. Have you not, when you have grown older, wished that you possessed the same tenderness of conscience which you had at first, that you had felt the same simplicity of faith? Have you not desired to enjoy that same intense delight in the service of God's house which you enjoyed during the first few months after your new birth? You have other graces now; you have virtues more useful in the battle of life, but yet there were beauties then which Jesus Christ admired, and which He would not allow to be soiled.

Jesus has such care for the weak ones, because *they will become strong one day*. All great graces were once little graces; all great faith must have once been little faith. It is always first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Mountain-moving faith was once a trembling thing. Kill the lambs? Then where will the sheep be? Slaughter the innocents? Then where shall Bethlehem find her men? Destroy the children? Then from where shall the warriors come who march in ranks to the battle? Jesus sees the weak ones not as they are, but as they *are to be*. He discerns the complete man in the babe of grace.

Moreover, my brothers and sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ's s*uretyship engagements* require that He should preserve the weakest as well as the strongest. God will require at Christ's hand every one of the elect. "Yours they were, and You gave them to Me," said our Lord. He is to present them faultless before His presence with exceedingly great joy. Just as Laban required every sheep from Jacob's hand, or else Jacob must bear the loss forever, so will God require at our Shepherd's hand every sheep, or He must forever dishonor His suretyship engagement. But it shall never be. He will be true to His word, and say, "Of all that You have given Me have I lost none." When a secretary delivers up his accounts, he is very pleased if it can be said by the auditors, "We have found them correct to a single farthing." But suppose he had said, "Well, there are slight errors, for I never took notice of the pence, I thought them such trifles that if I looked to the pounds it was quite enough." What would be thought of him? Who would trust him? It is the type of an honest man that he is correct to a farthing. If Jesus should bring to eternal glory all who are great in grace, but neglect the weakest, it would dishonor His great name. His honor is pledged to preserve the very weakest of the flock—

"Shepherd of the chosen number,
They are safe whom You do keep.
Other shepherds faint and slumber,
And forget to watch the sheep.
Watchful Shepherd!
You are awake while others sleep."

Besides His suretyship engagements, there are *His promises.* He has declared that whoever believes in Him shall never perish, but have everlasting life. That promise is not to the strong only, but to the weak also. He has said, "None shall pluck them out of My hand." Now, He does not say, "None shall pluck the great ones, but may pluck the little ones." No, "None shall pluck *them,"* that is, any of them! They are all saved, and all *equally* saved, because their safety does not depend upon their growth or their vigor—it depends on the strength of *His* arm, and the infallibility of His purpose. The sick and sorrowful inhabitants of Jerusalem are secured by the munitions of divine strength, and the bastions of everlasting love as much shelter the little child in the streets as the men that go forth to war.

We may be quite sure the tender Savior will take care of the lambs because *compassion argues that if any should be watched it should be these.* Cast away His people because they are timid, and trembling, and fearful? God forbid! Yonder is a mother who has a numerous family of children. My dear mother, may I argue with you? If you must neglect one of your children, shall I tell you which it should be? It should be that one which is lame in the feet, and has always been so sickly. Why, I think I see the mother looking at me angrily—"Stop," she says, "such shameful talk! That very one I look after with the most anxiety; if I did neglect one, it would be the big boy, grown up, and able to take care of himself, but that poor little dear! I could not forsake him; I carry him in my bosom from morning to night.

If there is one whom I am most tender over, it is just that very one." The instincts of our nature tell us that. The beatings of Jesus' heart are towards the trembling ones. When should a man forget or forsake his spouse? Never under any conceivable circumstances, but certainly not when she is sick or sorrowful. Shall he sue in the Divorce Court against her because she is afflicted, and full of pains and griefs? Is she to be cast out of doors because her spirits are broken? Only villainy, alone, could dictate such an argument, and rest assured, beloved, such an argument would have no tolerance with the Well-Beloved.

If you are in Jesus Christ, rest assured that His love will not desert you. It would be a very deplorable thing for every believer in the whole world if it were announced that the least believer should perish. If it should be proclaimed by sound of trumpet by some angelic messenger, that the Good Shepherd intended to cast off one of the least of His flock, though it were but *one*, I do not know what conclusion *you* would draw from it, my dear hearer, but mine would be this, "Then He will cast *me* off." I should feel at once that all the grounds of my security were gone—that *I* might be the castaway. Even if but one, why not I? Would not you feel the same, and where would any of us have any room for comfort? After the one announcement, so contrary to the promise, we might expect another, because in weakness, or in ignorance—if anything in the lamb-like nature is to destroy one of us—then of course, the next, and the next, and the next, and the next may perish. If a man has many creditors, and he says, "I will not pay this one," we all think perhaps he will not pay the next, and the next, and the next; and if God does not keep His promise to the very least, then not to the one next above the least, and so on to none at all. In fact, the whole blood-bought church of God may go to hell if but one goes there, and if the most wandering and backsliding shall be cast into hell, then the whole will go. If the

ship goes down enough to drown one man on board, she would drown the whole company. There is no safety for any of the ship's company unless there is safety for *all* on board. So, heir of heaven, looking at the consequences that would come from the ruin of the least, believe firmly that the Keeper of Israel will gather you with His arm, and carry you in His bosom.

IV. We shall conclude when we have made a **PRACTICAL CONCLUSION**.

What then? Why, first of all, let us gather the lambs for Christ. I am persuaded there are many who are not in church fellowship who ought to be, but who, perhaps, will never come forward unless they receive an encouraging word from some of their Christian friends. It is of the first importance that they should be gathered to Christ—*He* has done that for them. It is in the next degree important that they should be gathered into His church. May I therefore ask all of you who owe anything to my Lord, to make some kind of acknowledgment of your debt, by looking after those who need a helping hand? The Lord, speaking of His people says, "I taught Israel to go, taking him by the arms." You know what that means; you have done that with your children when you taught them to walk, holding them up by the arms. Do the same for your Master's little ones; teach some of these beginners to go, holding them up by encouragements. Did not someone do as much for you once? Do you not remember a kind friend who cheered and instructed you? Return your obligation to the Christian church by doing the same. I earnestly pray to see, during the next few months, a very large ingathering into our church of such as shall be saved. We do not want those who are *unconverted* to be added to the church—there is a step *before* that—they must first *give themselves* to Christ. But we do want as many as really belong to our Lord and Master to come into the fellowship of the faithful, and to share in the privileges of the church of God.

Next, let us learn from the text to carry in our bosoms those who are gathered. We have gathered many together into the church, but that is not all we must do—that is only the *beginning* of what riper Christians should count it to be their office to do towards the young. Every young Christian is presented to the Christian church just as Moses was presented to his mother by Pharaoh's daughter, with this commission, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." It is not possible that two pastors, or 20 pastors, should be able to visit and instruct all the members of such a church as this, and the lack must be supplied by you, my brothers, who have known the Lord these years, and by you, my sisters, who have become matrons in our Jerusalem. May I entreat you, by the love of Him who gave Himself for you, by all the tenderness of the heart of Christ, if there are any consolations of the Spirit, seek out your fellow members who may be weak in faith and downcast in mind, and speak comfortably to them. Tell them that their warfare is accomplished, that their sin is pardoned; point them to the Lord Jesus; unveil His beauties to them; make them, as far as you can, to understand with all the saints what are the heights and depths that they may grow in divine grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I trust that this sermon may minister comfort to mourners; but as for those who believe not in Christ at all, I can administer to them no comfort except by reminding them of this one fact—that it is *not too late* for them to trust in Jesus, and if they do so—however long they may have delayed, the door is not closed! May they enter before the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door!

795 JOSHUA'S VISION – JOSH. 5:13-15

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Feb. 16th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him, and said to Him, Are You for us, or for our adversaries? And He said, No, but as Captain of the army of the Lord have I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshipped, and said to Him, What does my Lord say to His servant? And the Captain of the Lord's army said to Joshua, Take your sandal off your foot; for the place whereon you stand is holy. And Joshua did so." — Joshua 5:13-15

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Joshua 6:10-27]

THE LORD DIVIDED the Jordan that His people might pass through dry-shod. This miracle greatly dispirited the Canaanites, and so prepared the way for an easy triumph for the invading Israelites. You would have naturally expected that the Lord would have bid His people avail themselves immediately of this terror to strike a heavy blow at once, and press on with might and main before the enemy could take a breath, and so sweep the land clear of the adversaries in a single campaign. But it was not so. Instead of immediate activity, the children of Israel pitched their tents at Gilgal, and there tarried for a considerable season. For God is in no hurry. His purposes can be

accomplished without haste, and though He would have us redeem the time because our days are evil, yet in His eternity He can afford to wait, and by His wisdom He so orders His times that they prove to be far better than our hurries. Why were the people to delay? That they might be obedient to commands which had been forgotten. In the desert, for many reasons, circumcision and the Passover had been neglected. They were not visited with any chastisement on account of this neglect, for the Lord considered their position and condition, and winked at their error, but before He would use them, He would have them fully obedient to His will. It cannot be expected that God should tolerate disobedient servants, and therefore they must stay awhile, till they had been attentive to the two great precepts of the Mosaic covenant. Dear friends, let us pause and ask ourselves, as believers, whether we have been in all respects conscientiously attentive to our Master's commands. If not, we may not expect Him to send a blessing to the church or to the world through us, until first of all we have yielded our willing obedience to that which He has prescribed for us. Are any of you living in the neglect of a known part of the divine will? Are you undesirous of knowing some portions of God's will, and therefore willfully blind to them? My dear brother, you are cutting the Achilles' tendon of your strength? You can never overthrow your enemies like Samson while your locks are thus shorn. You cannot expect that God should send you forth to conquer, and to bring to Him renown when you have not as yet conquered your own personal indolence and disobedience. He who is unfaithful in that which is least, will be unfaithful in that which is greater; and if you have not kept the Master's saying in the little vineyard of your personal history, how much less shall you be able to do it if He should entrust you with a greater field of service? Here then is the reason for Israel's delay, and it is a

reason why at the commencement of our special services [month-long services and prayer meetings for conversion of souls] we should make diligent search for neglected duties, and promptly fulfill them.

The two precepts which had been overlooked were very suggestive. The one was *circumcision*. Every man throughout the whole camp of Israel must be circumcised before God would begin to speak about Jericho. Not a word about the walls falling flat to the ground; not a syllable concerning compassing the accursed city seven days, until, first of all, the reproach of Egypt had been put away, and His people had received the token of the covenant. We are told in the New Testament that Christians must partake in a circumcision without hands, not of the flesh, but of the spirit. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly...but he is a Jew which is one inwardly." In the Colossians the apostle tells us that the true circumcision is the putting away of the body of death by the circumcision of Christ, by which I understand that the Christian must purge himself, in the power of the Spirit, and in the name of Christ, of every fleshly defilement, of every sinful thought, of every wrong ambition, of every carnal desire. If he is to be used by his Master, it is imperative that this be done, and be done at once, in the name of the Most High. "Be you clean who bear the vessels of the Lord." God will not fight His battles by the uncircumcised; He will have His people clean from the sin that does so easily beset them, or else He will not use them. Stop, then, my brothers and sisters, and let me beseech you to search your own hearts, and see what there may be within that might render you unfit to be blessed. If I, as God's minister, have no conversions, I dare not attribute the fact to divine sovereignty. It may be so, but I am always afraid to make divine sovereignty the scapegoat for my iniquities. I rather think that if God withholds the blessing, there is a cause; and may not the cause be in myself, that I do

not live as near to God as I should, or am indulging in something which His holy eyes cannot look upon? I speak to you who are church members, if in the Sunday school, if in your tract distribution, or if in any other work you are doing, you do not win souls to God, cry unto Him, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Sin blocks up the channel of mercy; the stream is strong enough, but you restrain its flow; your sins separate between you and your God, and, therefore, I beseech each one of you, if you are the Lord's, shake yourselves from the dust, sanctify a fast unto the Most High, and come before Him with supplication. Sit before Him in sackcloth and ashes, in the silent dejection of your abashed spirits, and confess before Him all your sins. Arise, pour out your hearts like water before the Lord, acknowledge your sins and offenses, and then, being purged from these by the water and the blood which flowed from the riven side of Jesus, you may arise to service and expect to be made a blessing.

But circumcision was not enough; they must also keep *the Passover*. This it appears they had only celebrated twice, once in Egypt, and once at the foot of Sinai; but they were now to begin a Passover which was to be kept every year without cessation. Brothers and sisters, you know the meaning the Passover has to us; it represents feeding upon Christ. He is the Paschal Lamb; we must put away the old leaven of sin, and we must come with pure hearts to feed upon our Lord. You will never be able to fight the Canaanites till you have fed on Christ. A spiritual man who tries to live without feeding upon Jesus soon becomes weak; he who has but slight communion with Christ, he who day after day has no sight of the King in His beauty, who is never taken to the banqueting house, and sees not the love banner waving over his head, is not likely to be a hero. If you

do not eat the bread of heaven, how can you do the work of heaven? The farmer that labors must be first partaker of the fruits; and if we would labor for God with success, we must first of all feed upon the Christ of God, and gather strength from Him. "Son of Man," said the voice from heaven to the prophet, "eat this roll." He must first eat it, and then speak concerning what he has handled and tasted. We must enjoy true religion in our own souls before we can be fit exponents of it to others. How shall you be heralds of a message which has never been spoken into your inner ear by the voice of the Lord? How can you expect to bring others to Life when your own soul is all but dead? How shall you scatter the live coals of eternal grace when the flame upon the hearth of your heart has almost expired? Brothers and sisters, let us keep the feast, let us draw near unto our Lord Jesus with pure hearts, let us renew our first faith and early love, taking the great Son of God to be once more the ground of our hope, the source of our joy, the object of our desires. Let us come near, yes, nearer and nearer still to Him, pressing to His embrace—so shall we be prepared to brave the conflict, and earn the victory.

After the ordinances had been kept, you will suppose that at once the trumpet sounded for an assault, and the valiant men of Israel, with their scaling ladders, and their battering rams, gathered round the devoted city to attack and carry it by storm. Patience! Patience! You are always in a hurry, but God is not. Joshua himself, that bold, brave spirit, is in some haste, and therefore he goes forth by night, meditating and patrolling; and as he is meditating upon God, and gazing every now and then at that huge city, and wondering where would be the best point of attack, and how it would be captured, he is astonished by the appearance of a stately personage who bears a sword in His hand. Brave Joshua, unconscious of anything like fear, advances at once to the apparent interloper, and demands of

Him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" He little guessed in what august presence he was standing until a majestic voice said, "No, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Then Joshua, discerning the divinity of the celestial warrior bowed and worshiped, and humbly inquired what he should do; and then after he had been instructed, he rose and went according to the Lord's directions to the capture of the city of palm trees.

The children of Israel may be likened to yonder gallant vessel, prepared for a long voyage. All the cargo is on board that is needed. All the stores are there, and every man in his place; in all respects, the good ship is fully equipped, but why does she linger? Why do not the sailors weigh the anchor? If you ask the man at the helm, he will tell you, "We are waiting for the captain." A good and sufficient reason indeed, for till the captain has come on board, it is idle for the vessel to put out to sea. So here Israel had been circumcised, and the blessed feast of the Paschal Lamb had been celebrated, but still they must not go to the conflict until the Captain Himself had arrived; and here, to Joshua's joy, the angel of the presence of the Most High appeared to claim the presidency of the war, and lead forth the hosts of God to certain victory. Brothers and sisters, this is precisely the condition of this church at the present moment; we have endeavored, I think, to draw near unto God, and to abide in His love; we have sought to purge ourselves from sin, and to be holy even as He is holy; but still this will not suffice, we need the divine presence, and we are now bid to pause for a while and to seek it, prayerfully, that in its matchless power we may go forward successfully.

I. I shall ask your earnest attention, this morning, to two or three brief rules for our present solemn engagements. *First*, **REALIZE THE FACT OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE.**

Jesus Himself comes to this holy war. Joshua saw *a man* clad in armor, equipped for war. Cannot the eyes of your faith see the same? There He stands, Jesus, God over all, blessed forever, yet a man. He is most surely God, but with equal certainty bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He is in the midst of His church; He walks among the golden candlesticks; His promise is, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." I do not wish to talk, but I desire rather that you should exercise your own minds, your faith, your spiritual powers, and vividly believe that Jesus is here; so believe it, that your inner eye beholds what you believe. The Son of Man is here, as surely here as He was with the disciples at the lake when they saw coals of fire, and fish laid on them, and bread; He is here to talk with us by His Spirit, as He did to Peter and to the rest of the disciples on that memorable day. Not carnally, but still in real truth, Jesus is where His people meet together. Joshua saw Him *with His sword in His hand.* O that Christ might come in our midst with the sword of the Spirit in His hand; come to effect deeds of love but yet deeds of power; come with His two-edged sword to smite our sins, to cut to the heart His adversaries, to slay their unbelief, to lay their iniquities dead before Him! The sword is drawn, not in the scabbard, as alas, it has been so long in many churches, but made bare for present *active* use. It is *in His hand,* not in the minister's hand, not even in an angel's hand, but the sword drawn is in *His* hand. Oh, what power there is in the gospel when Jesus holds the hilt, and what gashes it makes into hearts that were hard as stone, when Jesus cuts right and left at the hearts and consciences of men! Brothers and sisters, seek this presence, and seeking it, believe it; and when you hear the gospel preached, or when you meet together for prayer, think you see in the center of the assembly the Champion of Israel with uplifted sword, prepared to do great exploits, as in days of old.

The glorious man whom Joshua saw, was *on his side.* The day shall come when the ungodly shall see this man with His sword drawn; but in answer to their question, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" they shall find Him to be the fiercest of their foes. In the midst of His church, Christ carries a sword only for the purposes of love to it. Oh, how blessed it will be if you can know that out of His mouth there goes a two-edged sword, like unto a flame of fire; and to know that if you dare to bring your heart near to that sword, that it may cut and kill in you everything obnoxious to the divine will, and then bring your children and kinsfolk, and those who sit in these pews side by side with you, and say, "O Master, let Your sword of fire go through them according to Your word, 'I kill and make alive, I wound and I heal'—O kill, that they may live; O wound, that they may be healed!"—

"Your arrows sharply pierce the heart
Of foemen of the King,
And under Your dominion's rule
The people down do bring.
O You who are the mighty one,
Your sword gird on Your thigh,
Even with Your glory excellent,
And with Your majesty."

The divine presence then is what we desire, and if we have it, brothers and sisters, *faith at once is encouraged.* It was enough for the army of Cromwell to know that he was there, the ever victorious, the irresistible, to lead on his Ironsides to the fray. Many a time the presence of an old Roman general was equal to another legion; as soon as the cohorts perceived that he was come whose eagle eye watched every motion of the enemy, and whose practiced hand led his battalions upon the most salient

points of attack, each man's blood leaped within him, and he grasped his sword and rushed forward, secure of success. My brothers and sisters, our King is in the midst of us, and our faith should be in active exercise! "The shout of a King is in the midst of us," it is said, for where the King is there the people shout for joy, and because of confidence of victory. The preacher may preach, but what is that? But if the King is there, then it is preaching in very deed! The congregations may have met, and they may have gone again. "The panoramic view which has dissolved," you say. Ah, so it may seem to you, but if the Spirit of God were there, all that has been done will abide, and remain even to that Day of Judgment, when the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. "She is nothing but a simple girl sitting down to talk to a few little children about their souls." Just so, but if the Lord is there, what awe gathers round that spot! If the King Himself sits in that class, what deeds are done that shall make the angels of heaven sing anew for joy! "He is nothing but a humble man, unlettered, earnest, but not eloquent, standing in the corner of a street, addressing a few hundred people. His talk will soon be forgotten." Precisely so, but if the King is there, it shall never be forgotten! The footprints of every true servant of the Lord shall not be in the sand, but in the enduring brass, the record of which shall outlast the wreck of matter! When the King is with us, faith is confident, because God girds faith as with a golden belt, and from head to foot clothes her with a panoply of armor, and puts a sword into her hand which is all-destroying, and with which she cuts through coats of mail. "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

When the King is with His people, then *hope is greatly encouraged,* for she says, "Who can stand against the Lord of Hosts?" There must be conversions; it is no longer a question of trust and expectation, but of *absolute certainty* when Jesus is at

the preaching! My brothers and sisters, if by earnest prayer we shall really bring the King into our midst today, as I am persuaded we shall, and if we keep Him here, holding Him by our entreaties, and by our tears, which are the golden chains that bind Christ to His people, then we need not think that there shall be good done, nor hope so, but it *will* be so, it *shall* be so, for where Christ is, there is the manifestation of the omnipotence of deity, and the hardest of hearts feel its influence.

Where Jesus is, *love becomes inflamed,* for oh, of all the things in the world that can set the heart burning, there is nothing like the presence of Jesus! A glimpse of Him will overcome us, so that we shall be almost ready to say, "Turn away Your eyes from me, for they have overcome me." Oh, but a smell of the aloes, and the myrrh, and the cassia which drop from His perfumed garments, but a smell of these, I say, and the sick and the faint among us shall grow strong! Oh, but a moment's leaning of the head upon that gracious bosom, and a reception of His divine love into our poor cold hearts, and we shall be cold no longer, but shall glow like seraphs, being made equal to every labor, and capable of every suffering. Then shall the Spirit of the Lord be upon us, and our old men shall see visions, and our young men shall dream dreams, and upon the servants and the handmaidens will God pour out His Spirit. If we do but know that Jesus is here, every power will be developed, and every grace will be strengthened, and we shall cast ourselves into the Lord's battle with heart, and soul, and strength! There is not a single part of our inner man which will not be bettered by the presence of Christ; therefore is this to be desired above all things.

Brothers and sisters, suppose that Christ is here this morning—*His presence will be most clearly ascertained by those who are most like He is.* Joshua was favored with this sight because he

alone had eyes that could bear it. I do not read that even Caleb saw this man with His sword drawn; only Joshua saw Him, because Joshua was the most spiritual and the most active. If you desire to see Christ, you must grow to be like He is, and labor to serve Him with heart, and soul, and strength. Christ comes not in the visions of the night to those who toss upon the bed of indolence, but He reveals Himself in the night watches to those who learn to watch and war. Bring yourselves, by the power of the Spirit, into union with Christ's desires, and motives, and plans of action, and you are likely to see Him. I would that all of you were Joshuas, but if not, if but some shall perceive Him, we shall still receive a blessing.

I am sure this presence of Christ *will be needed by us all.* All of you who love Jesus intend to do Him service during this next month, and, indeed, I hope as long as you live. Now, there is nothing good which you can do without Christ. "Without Me you can do nothing," is a great and undoubted fact. If you meet to pray, you shall not pray acceptably unless He is with you; if you teach, or preach, or whatever you do, however small the labor, you shall accomplish nothing unless it is through His power, and through His manifested presence with you. Go not to warfare at your own charges, but wait upon your Master, tarrying at Jerusalem until you are filled with power from on high.

But, brothers and sisters, *Jesus Christ's presence may be had.* Do not despond and say that in the olden times the Master revealed Himself, but He will not do so now. He will, He will, He will! His promise is as good as ever; He delights to be with us even as with our fathers. If He does not come it is because we hinder Him—we are not straitened in Him, but straitened in our own heart. Let me persuade you that all the great things which were done at Pentecost can be done again in this Tabernacle. Let me persuade you that all the wondrous conversions which were

worked in any of the ages of the church may be repeated at this hour!

Do not say that Luther, or Calvin, or Whitefield, or Wesley were great men, and therefore around them great things gathered; my beloved, the weakest of men may be more honored than the greatest, if God so wills it. Our weakness, lack of learning, lack of eloquence, and what not—I look upon these as advantages rather than not, for if we were eminent, we might perhaps claim some of the glory. But if we are "less than nothing and vanity," then is there a clear stage for the divine operations. And why should we not so see in this place such a revival as shall shake all England, and stir the dry bones in the valley of vision at this day as they never were stirred since apostolic times? We have but to expect it, to believe it, to pray for it, to work for it, and we shall have it! God's clouds still pour down the water floods as plenteously as when Elisha went up to the top of Carmel. The Lord thunders mightily against His enemies at this day, as when He went forth with His people in the days of yore. Think not that the Almighty has ceased to do marvels—the Lord of Hosts is still the king eternal, immortal, and invisible— with an arm which does wonders. You have still only to plead the power of the precious blood and the meritorious death of Christ, to see wonders in this year of divine grace which shall even eclipse any that your fathers saw, or heard of in the old time before them. May God grant to each believer among us the vision of the God-like man with the sword drawn in His hand, and then may we go forth in the strength which He alone confers.

II. In the second place, **UNDERSTAND THE LORD'S POSITION IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE**. "As Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come."

What a relief this must have been for Joshua. Perhaps he thought himself the captain; but now the responsibility was taken from

him; he was to be the lieutenant, but the King Himself would marshal His hosts. I feel it no small relief to my own mind to feel that though I have been at your head these 14 years, leading you on in God's name to Christian service, yet I am not your captain, but there is a greater one, the presence angel of the Most High, the Lord Jesus—He is in our midst as Commander-in-Chief. Though my responsibilities are heavy, yet the leadership is not with me. He is a leader and commander for the people. Brothers and sisters, wherever Christ is, we must remember that *He is Commander-in- Chief to us all.* We must never tolerate in the church any great man to domineer over us; we must have no one to be Lord and Master except Jesus. Christ is the Field-Marshal, the Captain of our salvation, and if you are a member of the church of God, you must admit this, not only as a general fact, but as a fact particularly in your case. Christ is *your* Master. You are not to say, "I prefer this or that doctrine." What have you to do with likes or dislikes? Believe what He tells you. You are not to say, "I prefer a certain form of worship." What have you to do with preferences? Worship as the Master bids you. Alas for the day when whims and tastes, and fancies come into the Christian church to lead the people. All this Puseyism which we hear so many outcries about is simply the putting up of *taste* into the place of simple *obedience* to Christ. If we would but just keep close to Christ's word, we would be right enough. I pray each believer here to remember that he is in no respect his own master in the things of God, but that Christ is Commander-in-Chief. "Is it of any use to send missionaries to India?" asked someone of the Duke of Wellington. "What are your marching orders?" said the Duke. "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Those are our marching orders; we have nothing to do with whether they are prudent orders or not; they are sure to be good if they come from *Him*. Our duty is to do as our

Commander bids us to do. Every word of Christ, if we would see Him do wonders in our midst, must be obeyed. Not the great precepts only, but the little ones, too. It behooves Christians to have done with that cant about non-essentials! My brothers and sisters, every command of Christ is essential to us as servants. Not essential to our salvation—we *are* saved; that is not the question for us to raise; but being saved, and being servants of Christ, every command which comes from the Great Captain is essential for every soldier to keep. It matters not though it is simply a ceremony, yet still we have no right to alter it. What would the court-martial say to any of the private soldiers, who, having received an order from a captain, should say, "Well, I did not consider it to be exceedingly important?" "Drum him out of the regiment, sir; there is an end to all discipline in the army when soldiers criticize their orders." So is it with Christ's law. We have no right to say, for instance about believers' baptism, "Well, it is a non-essential." Who told you so? If Jesus commands it, obey it; and if it is the Lord's law, make haste and delay not to keep the Master's statute. I single out that one precept, but there are many others which are perhaps of greater importance, if we are allowed to say greater or less about anything which Christ has bid us do. My brothers and sisters, let us seek now to put our minds into the hands of the Holy Spirit to be taught what the great Captain's will is, and when we know it, let our souls bend under it, as the willow bends in the breath of the wind, and as the boat upon the sea is driven to and fro in the gale. Down with you, self, down with you! Carnal judgment and foolish reason lie still! Let the Word of God be paramount within the soul, all opposition being hushed.

Beloved, if we do not act with the Captain, *disappointment will be sure to follow*. The Lord had issued orders that none of the tribes should take of the accursed spoil of Jericho. Achan did

so. I have often wondered that only Achan did it, but that one Achan brought defeat upon Israel at the gates of Ai. I wonder how many Achans there are here this morning. I should feel myself very much at ease if I thought there were only one, but I am afraid that there are many who have the accursed thing hidden within them—the love of money, or wrong ways of doing business, or unforgiving tempers, or an envious spirit towards their fellow Christians. Now, if the possession of these bad things by one will stop the blessing, we are in a very evil plight, but he is in a worse plight, by far, who is the occasion of the evil. Where are you, Achan? God will find you out even if we do not! He will bring us all by our tribes, by our families, by our households, and then, man by man; and woe unto the son of Carmi if he is taken! Brothers and sisters, the violation of the law of the Captain may bring defeat upon the whole company!

And where the law is not obstinately and willfully violated, yet its neglect will cause much trouble. They were commanded to make no covenant with the Canaanites, but in a thoughtless hour, the Gibeonites came like persons from a far country, the Israelites believed their deceitful story, and made a covenant with them; and this became a trouble to Israel long afterwards. If as a church we forget the law of Christ, even though we do not contemptuously break it; if we ignorantly forget it, we may expect no small amount of evil to flow from it. Do not tolerate the idea that God punishes His people for sin in the sense of punitive justice, but always hold it for certain that the Lord chastises His people for sin as a father chastises his children, and that the great Head of the church will not allow His laws to be broken with impunity by His own people. I wish I could speak to you with the earnestness which I feel boiling up within my soul. I would, my brothers and sisters, that we should keep our Master's commands in every jot and tittle, depending upon

His presence, feeling Him to be here, not daring in His presence to offend, but yielding up to Him the reins of government in all respects, that we might then have His blessing. I want that we should all keep to the Word of God, minding each precept as far as we understand it. I want, moreover, that we should be attentive to that mind of Christ which is often expressed by the Holy Spirit in divine monitions in our minds, that the law of the book may be with us, and the law of the Spirit within us. If we are obedient to both these, we shall be prepared, like Joshua, to advance to the war.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly. Our third rule is **WORSHIP HIM WHO IS PRESENT WITH US**.

Joshua, it is said, fell on his face to the earth. Worship is the highest elevation of the spirit, and yet the lowliest prostration of the soul. If Christ is here, brothers and sisters, when you reach your homes get a little time of quiet and worship, and when you come up again, this evening, in your songs and prayers truly worship the ever present God—bow down in the lowliest reverence of your subdued spirit as though you were actually in heaven. If you have no wings with which to veil your face, still cover it with shame; if you have no crown to cast, yet such talent as you have, lay it all down reverentially before Him. Worship the Son of God! Then, when you have so done, *give up yourself to His command:* say to Him, "What says my Lord unto His servant?" I wish you could spend this afternoon, those of you who are not actively engaged, in trying to get an answer to this question: "What says my Lord unto His servant? What is there for me to learn, for me to feel, for me to do? And as I would help my brothers and sisters during this month, Lord, what part of the work am I to take?" When you have done this, dear friends, I want you to imitate Joshua in the third thing, namely, *take your shoes off from your feet.* Joshua, perhaps, had not felt what a solemn thing it was to fight for

God, to fight as God's executioner against condemned men. Therefore he must take his shoes off. We never can expect a blessing if we go about God's work flippantly. I shudder when I see any sitting at the Lord's Table who can indulge in light remarks or in wandering thoughts on so solemn an occasion. What have you to do here, not having on a wedding garment? There are some of us whose besetting sin is levity of spirit; cheerfulness we are to cultivate, but we must beware lest levity become a cankerworm to our graces. Brothers and sisters, this next month must be a holy month unto us. I ask our young and our old friends alike to seek a quiet and sober spirit. To seek to save souls from going down to the pit of hell is no pastime; to talk of Jesus is no trifle. We do not meet to pray in sport; we do not gather together in supplication as a mere matter of form. Angels are in our midst observing us. The King Himself is here! How would you behave if you actually saw Jesus with your eyes? If I were to vacate this pulpit, and the Crucified One stood here, stretching out His pierced hands, and looking down upon you with the mild radiance of His sovereign love—how would you feel? Ask to feel just so, for He *is* here! Faith can perceive Him. Ask to feel just so at this present moment, and so to go out to your work this afternoon, and all the remaining days of your life, as a servant of God who is standing in the presence of his Lord upon holy ground, and cannot, therefore, afford to trifle since he has solemn work to do, and means to do it in his Master's name.

IV. To conclude, let us now, even before we separate, **ADVANCE TO ACTION ACCORDING TO THE MASTER'S COMMAND**.

Unconverted men and women, you are in our Jericho—we wish to conquer you for Christ. Our desire is to win you to Jesus for your own good and for His glory. Now, what are we to do with you? Joshua was bid to go round the city seven times.

We would preach to you the gospel of Christ, not seven times, but 70 times seven times. They were to blow the rams' horns. The rams' horn was most mean as to matter, most dull as to sound, and the least showy as to appearance. So, we say with the rough sound of our ram's horn that unless you repent, you will perish! Sin must be punished! Sin is upon you, and God must punish you! Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His law can fail, and this is one part of His law, "The soul that sins, it shall die." You have sinned, you are always sinning, and die you must. Some of you are going from bad to worse. If you do not live in outward sin, yet the sins of thought and heart will condemn you. You will die before long, and when you die, the Lord will cast you into the place which He has prepared for the devil and his angels. Be not deceived, there may be but a step between you and death; or if your life is prolonged for a little season, yet how soon will it *be over*. Eternity! Eternity! How dread to you if you plunge into it unprepared, to face an angry Judge, no righteousness of Christ to plead, and no blood in which to wash your guilty soul! You are standing, some of you, between the jaws of hell; the gospel has been preached to you and you have neglected it. You have been brought up by godly parents, and you have despised their admonitions. Therefore wrath will come upon you to the uttermost. As sure as you live you shall be driven from Jehovah's presence into the place where hope cannot follow you, and where mercy will never seek you. We must sound this ram's horn; we only pray that God may bless our warning voice to you!

After the rams' horns came the ark, which the priests carried round and round the city. That ark was the type of Christ. We beg to bring Christ before you, you unconverted ones. Jesus Christ came into this world to seek and to save that which was lost. God smote Him instead of us. He took the sins

of His people, and God punished Him for our sins instead of punishing us. Christ is the great Substitute for sin. If you trust Him you shall live. If you will take Him this day to be your Savior, and to be your Master and your Lord, you shall never perish, for God has pledged His word for it, that if you believe in Him you shall be saved! O that you would look to Christ, and live! Your good works are nothing, your tears and prayers all go for nothing as to merit, but if you look to Jesus hanging from yonder cross, you shall live! If you will trust yourself with Him who is now at the right hand of the eternal Father, crowned with many crowns, sooner shall heaven's high throne be shaken than your soul be allowed to perish. Only believe in Jesus, and you shall live, for this is the gospel, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, He who believes not shall be damned." We seek not to mince matters with you—damned you *will* be unless you trust Christ! Damned you *never* shall be if you will come and cast yourself before Him! "Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish by the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Suppose that in the visions of the night, this night, when you are on your bed you should suddenly see in your chamber the man with a sword drawn in His hand? You would not need to ask the question, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" for your own conscience would soon tell you. Suppose you should hear a solemn voice declare, "The harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and you are not saved"? "Because I have called and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded...I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes"? Suppose you saw that sword uplifted and about to strike you? Would you not start in your dream, and your face be covered with a clammy sweat, feeling indescribable horrors? Yet such is your case today, and unless you repent, such will be your case eternally. I bless God that now our Lord Jesus has no sword drawn in His

hand, but He comes to you with open hands, and says, "Come unto Me all you who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." With tears He invites you to come to Him, persuades you to come. O why do you tarry? Why do you turn your backs upon your own mercy, and seal your own death warrant? God grant that you may come to Jesus, and before He grasps that sharp destroying sword.

Lastly, brothers and sisters, we are not only to sound the ram's horn of warning, and to bear round and round the sinner's conscience the ark of Christ's grace, but *all the host must engage in the work*. Did you notice that the whole of the people were to compass the city! It would not fall otherwise; and they were to shout, too, at the last. I want you, my fellow members, to unite in our earnest efforts to win souls for Christ. I have a right to claim it, and now I entreat you to fulfill the claim. You profess to have been bought with the Lord's blood, and to be His disciples. I ask you all, if you are sincere in your professions, come with us round about this Jericho, every one of you. If you cannot all come up to the public prayer meetings, yet send us your hearts, pray for sinners, plead for the unconverted, give the eternal Leader no rest till He is pleased to use His great power for their conversion. I am almost inclined to fall on my knees to ask you church members to rally round us at this hour. If you owe your conversion to me, under God, as many of you do, I charge you by every filial tie you feel, desert me not just now. If you have ever been comforted, as I know some of you have; if I have ever been God's voice to your souls, I beseech you return to me this kindness by drawing very near to God in prayer for the souls of others. For your own children's souls be very earnest; for the souls of your employees, and kinsfolk, and neighbors, wrestle with God even unto tears. And if you will not do it, I had almost said I had sooner you were not with us. If you will not pray, if you will not join in the common

supplication, why do you cumber us? O Meroz, take care lest you be accused if you come not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty! But you will come, God will be with us, and show us His bare right hand resplendent in our midst, and unto Him shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

796 JOSHUA'S OBEDIENCE – JOSH. 1:7

A Sermon Delivered by the REV. C. H. SPURGEON At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper where ever you go." — Joshua 1:7

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Joshua 1]

JOSHUA WAS very highly favored in the matter of the promises of God. The promises given him by God were broadly comprehensive, and exceedingly encouraging. But Joshua was not therefore to say within himself, "These covenant engagements will surely be fulfilled, and I may therefore sit still and do nothing." On the contrary, because God had decreed that the land should be conquered, Joshua was to be diligent to lead the people onward to battle; He was not to use the promise as a couch upon which his indolence might luxuriate, but as a belt wherewith to gird up his loins for future activity.

As a spur to energy, let us always regard the gracious promises of our God. We would sin against Him most ungratefully and detestably were we to say within ourselves, "God will not desert His people, therefore let us venture into sin." And we are almost equally wicked if we whisper in our minds, "God will assuredly fulfill His own decrees, and give the souls of His redeemed as a reward to His Son Jesus, therefore

let us do nothing and refrain altogether from zealous Christian service." This is not proper language for true children. This is the talk of the indolently ignorant, or of mere pretenders who do but mock God while they pretend to reverence His decrees. By the oath, by the promise, by the covenant, and by the blood which seals it, we are exhorted continually to be at work for Christ, since we are saved in order that we may serve Him in the power of the Holy Spirit, with heart, and soul and strength.

Joshua was especially exhorted *to continue in the path of obedience.* He was the captain, but there was a great Commander-in-Chief who gave him his marching orders. Joshua was not left to his own fallible judgment, or fickle fancy—he was to do according to all that was written in the book of the law. So is it with us who are believers. We are not under the law, but under grace—yet there is still a gospel rule which we are bound to follow, and the law in the hand of Christ is a delightful rule of life to the believer. We are not to follow, in the service of God, our own fancies. We are not allowed to frame regulations according to our own conceptions, but our direction is, "whatever HE says unto you, do it." His servants shall serve Him; His sheep follow His footsteps; His disciples obey their Lord; His soldiers fulfill His pleasure: "By their fruits you shall know them." If we are not obedient unto Christ, we may rest assured that we have not the spirit of Christ, and are none of His.

I. In speaking upon the obedience which was enjoined upon Joshua, I would remind you that **OBEDIENCE IS THE HIGHEST PRACTICAL COURAGE**.

Read the text, "Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant commanded you." You supposed when you heard the words, "Only be you strong and very courageous," that some great exploit was to be performed, and the

supposition was correct, for all exploits are comprehended in that one declaration, "That you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant commanded you." The highest exploit of the Christian life is to obey Christ. This is such an exploit, my brothers and sisters, as shall never be performed by anyone unless he has learned the rule of faith, has been led to rest upon Christ, and to advance upon the path of obedience in a strength which is not his own, but which he has received from the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The world counts obedience to be a mean-spirited thing, and speaks of rebellion as freedom. We have heard men say, "I will be my own master; I shall follow my own will." To be a free thinker and live as he wishes seems to be the worldling's glory, and yet if the world could but have sense enough to convict itself of folly, upon indisputable proof being afforded it, it were not difficult to prove that a reviler of the obedient is a fool. Take the world's own martial rule. Who is accounted to be the boldest and the best soldier but the man who is most thoroughly obedient to the captain's command? There is a story told of the old French wars which has been repeated hundreds of times. A sentinel is set to keep a certain position, and at nightfall, as he is pacing to and fro, the emperor himself comes by. He does not know the password. Straightway the soldier stops him. "You cannot pass," he says. "But I must pass," says the emperor. "No," replies the man, "if you were the little corporal in gray himself, you should not go by," by which, of course, he meant the emperor. Thus the autocrat, himself, was held in check by order. The vigilant soldier was afterwards handsomely rewarded, and the entire world said that he was a brave fellow. Now, from that instance, and there are hundreds of such which are always told with approbation, we learn that obedience to superior commands, carried out at all hazards, is one of the highest proofs of courage that a man can

possibly give; to this the world itself gives its assent. Then surely it is not a mean and sneaking thing for a man to be obedient to Him who is the Commander-in- Chief of the universe, the King of kings, and Lord of lords! He who would do the right and the true thing in cold blood, in the teeth of ridicule, is a bolder man than he who flings himself before the cannon's mouth for fame, yes, and let me add, to persist in scrupulous obedience throughout life may need more courage than even the martyr displays when once and for all he gives himself to burn at the stake!

In Joshua's case, *full obedience to the divine command involved innumerable difficulties.* The command to him was that he should conquer the whole of the land for the favored tribes, and to the best of his ability he did it; but he had to besiege cities which were walled up to the heavens, and to fight with monarchs whose warriors came to battle in chariots of iron armed with scythes! The first conflicts were something terrible; if he had not been a bold and able soldier, he would have put away his sword and fled from the strife; but the spirit of obedience sustained him. Though you and I have no Hivites and Jebusites to kill, no cities to pull down, no chariots of iron to encounter, yet we shall find it no easy thing to keep to the path of Christian consistency. Count well the cost, you who have just enlisted under my Lord's banner—you shall not find it to be child's play to "follow the Lamb where ever He goes." To put on the pilgrim's dress of white linen, and then carelessly to bespatter it with unholiness, and soon to profess repentance, only to fall again, and bemire it in the dirt, and then time after time to wash it, or *say* you have washed it—this is easy enough. Fits and starts of godliness many have who end their lives in despair. The Christianity of some people costs them little cross-bearing, much less any "resisting unto blood, striving against sin." A merely nominal profession is easy enough to make and to

maintain after the manner of the times; but to be a Christian indeed, through and through, to eat, and drink, and sleep eternal life, to live the life of God on earth—this is the work, this is the difficulty! You will need to have the strength of Samson, and something more, to pluck up the gates which block up your onward road—a divine strength must be yours if you are to keep the crown of the causeway against all comers.

Moreover, Joshua had not only difficulties to meet with, but *he made a great many enemies through his obedience.* This was naturally so. As soon as it was known that Jericho had been taken, that Ai had been carried by assault, then we read of first one confederation of kings, and then of another, their object being to destroy the power of Joshua, since these kings well knew that he would crush them if they did not crush him. Now, the Christian is in a like plight. He will be sure to make enemies. It will be one of his objectives to make none; but, on the other hand, if to do the right, and to believe the true, and to carry out the honest, should make him lose every earthly friend, he will count it but a small loss, since his great Friend in heaven will be yet more friendly and reveal Himself to him more graciously than ever. O you who have taken up His cross, don't you know what your Master said? "I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Christ is the great Peacemaker, but before peace, He brings war. Where the light comes, the darkness must retire. Where truth is, the lie must flee, or, if it abides, there must be a stern conflict, for the truth cannot and will not lower its standard, and the lie must be trod under foot. If you follow Christ, you shall have all the dogs of the world yelping at your heels. If you mince matters, and hold with the hare and run with the hounds, you may be a Christian and a worldling, too, after a sort; but if you would live so as to

stand the test of the last tribunal, depend upon it the world will not speak well of you. He who has the friendship of the world will find that he is an enemy to God; but if you are true and faithful to the Most High, men will resent your unflinching fidelity since it is a testimony against their iniquities. Fearless of all consequences, you must do the right. You will need the courage of a lion to unhesitatingly pursue a course which shall turn your best friend into your fiercest foe, but for the love of Jesus you must do it. For the truth's sake to hazard reputation and affection, is such a deed that to do it constantly you will need a degree of moral principle which only the Spirit of God can work in you; yet turn not your back like a coward, but play the man.

And again, Joshua, in his obedience, needed much courage because *he had undertaken a task which involved, if he carried it out, long years of perseverance.* After he had captured one city, he must go on to attack the next fortress. The days were not long enough for his battles. He bids the sun stand still, and the moon is stayed; and even when that long day has passed, yet the morning sees still him sword in hand. Joshua was like one of those old knights who slept in their armor; he was always fighting; his sword must have been well hacked, and often must his armor have been blood red. He had before him a lifelong enterprise. Such is the life of the Christian—a warfare from beginning to end. As soon as you are washed in Christ's blood and clothed in His righteousness, you must begin to hew your way through a lane of enemies right up to the eternal throne. Every foot of the way will be disputed; not an inch will Satan yield to you; you must continue daily to fight. "He who endures to the end, the same shall be saved." Not the beginner who commences in his own strength, and soon comes to an end, but he who, girt about with divine grace, with the Spirit of God within him, determines to hold on till he has smitten the last

foe, and never leaves the battlefield till he has heard the word, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" Let the man who says that the Christian's life is mean and devoid of manliness, let him go and learn wisdom before he speaks, for of all men the persevering believer is the most manly. You who boast of yourself, of your courage in sinning, you yield to the foe; you are a cringing cur; you turn tail upon the enemy; you court the friendship of the world; you have not courage enough to dare to do the right and the true; you have passed under the yoke of Satan and your own passions, and to conceal your own cowardice, you are base enough to call the brave Christian a coward. Away with you for adding lying to your other vices!

Oftentimes, if we follow Christ we shall need to be brave indeed in facing the world's customs. You will find it so, young man, in a mercantile house. You will find it so, husband, even in connection with your own wife and children if they are unsaved. Children have found this so in school. Traders find it so in the marketplace. He who would be a true Christian had need wear a stout heart. There is a story told of Dr. Adam Clarke which shows the courage which the youthful Christian sometimes needs. When he was in a shop in the town of Colerain, they were preparing for the annual fair, and some rolls of cloth were being measured. One of them was too short, and the master said, "Come, Adam, you take that end, and I will take the other, and we will soon pull it, and stretch it till it is long enough." But Adam had no hands to do it with, and no ears to hear his master's dishonest order, and at last he flatly refused, whereupon the master said, "You will never make a tradesman; you are good for nothing here; you had better go home, and take to something else." Now that thing may not be done now, for men do not generally cheat in that open downright kind of way nowadays, but they cheat after more roguish fashions. The records of the bankruptcy court will tell you what I mean.

Bankruptcies, one after another of the same person, are doubled-distilled thieving, generally; not old-fashioned thieving like that which once brought men to prison and to the gallows, but something worse than highway robbery and burglary. The genuine Christian will every now and then have to put his foot down and say, "No, I cannot, and I will not be mixed up with such a thing as that," and he will have to say this to his master, to his father, to his friend whose respect he desires to gain, and who may be of the greatest possible assistance to him in life. But if it is your duty, my dear brother and sister, thus to do the right, do it if the skies fall; do it if poverty should stare you in the face; do it if you should be turned into the streets tomorrow. You shall never be a loser by God in the long run, and if you have to suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are you! Count yourselves to be happy that you have the privilege of making any sacrifice for the sake of conscience, for in these days we have not the power to honor God as they did who went to prison, and to the rack, and to the stake. Let us not, therefore, cast aside other opportunities which are given to us of showing how much we love the Lord, and how faithfully we desire to serve Him. Be very courageous to do what the Lord Jesus bids you in all things, and let men judge you to be an idiot if they will, you shall be one of the Lord's champions, a true Knight of the Cross.

II. Secondly, I learn from the text that **THE EXACTNESS OF OBEDIENCE IS THE ESSENCE OF OBEDIENCE**. "That you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses, My servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left."

The world says, "We must not be too precise." Hypocritical world! The world means that it would be glad to get rid of God's law altogether, but as it scarcely dares to say that point-blank, it cants with the most sickening of all cant,

"We must not be too particular, or too nice." As one once said to an old Puritan, "Many people have torn their consciences in halves—could not you just make a little nick in yours?" "No," he said, "I cannot, for my conscience belongs to God." "We must live, you know," said a money-loving shopkeeper, as his excuse for doing what he could not otherwise defend. "Yes, but we must die," was the reply, "and therefore we must do no such thing." There is no particular necessity for any of us living. We are probably better dead if we cannot live without doing wrong.

The very essence of obedience, I have said, lies in exactness. Probably your child, if sometimes disobedient, would still, as a general rule, do what you told him. It would be in the little things that thoroughgoing and commendable obedience would appear. Let the world judge of this for itself. Here is an honest man. Do people say of him, "He is such an honest man that he would not steal a horse"? No, that would not prove him to be very honest, but they say, "He would not even take a pin that did not belong to him." That is the world's own description of honesty, and surely when it comes to obedience to God it ought to be the same. Here is a merchant, and he boasts, "I have a clerk who is such a good accountant that you would not find a mistake of a single penny in six months' reckoning." It would not have meant much if he had said, "You would not find a mistake of 10,000 pounds in six months' reckoning." And yet if a man stands to little things, and is minute and particular, worldlings charge him with being too stringent, too strict, too strait-laced, and I know not what besides; while all the time, according to their own showing, the essence of honesty and of correctness is exactness in little things. If I profess to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucial test will not be in great actions, but in little ones. My dear brothers and sisters, I wish the Christian church really thought this. There is

so much in many churches of trifling with words—I mean by people professing to believe what is not believed—putting another meaning upon words than what is the plain natural sense which is nothing better, I conceive, than lying in the sight of God. I know, too, members of churches who say, "I do not approve of a great deal that is in our creed," and yet they remain members of such a church. I do not understand it! I cannot comprehend how a man can bear to partake in the doings of any church, whatever that church may be, when he knows those doings to be wrong—making it a part of his religion to *do* wrong—winking at and shutting his eyes to what his own conscience tells him is not according to God's will.

If I thought that in any of our proceedings in this place we did not do according to God's mind, I would humbly desire to alter at once; and I do pray that we, as a church, whenever we err, or in anything may not have acted according to Scripture, may be willing to bring ourselves to Holy Scripture, and to be always schooling our minds to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we may do His will in all things. The church may be wrong in a great many points, and yet be accepted before God, because the conscience of the church may not be enlightened. But what I plead for is that as far as our conscience is enlightened, we are bound to act up to it, and that we have no right to do anything about which we cannot be sure that we are right, and no right to be uniting ourselves to any body of professors who are not carrying out the Lord's commands and laws in all things so far as we can judge. Not in some things, but in all things we are to be observant of the divine will. Is there any ordinance of Christ which some of you have never attended to? Have you attended to baptism and the Lord's Supper? I charge you, before the living God, see to it as you value your own peace of mind. "He who knows his master's will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." I am

not now speaking of the discipline of the *law*—the Christian is not under that—I *am* speaking, however, of the discipline of Christ's own house, over which Christ is the Master, and this is the law of Christ's house—if we will not be obedient we shall not abide in the comfortable enjoyment of His love, but we shall be chastened, and scourged, and smitten until we become willing to yield ourselves up to the Lord's mind. Christian, through thick and thin, through fair and foul, through poverty or wealth, through shame or honor, cling close to your Master. Be among those virgin-souls, who—

"Where ever the Lamb does lead,
From His footsteps never depart."

Those are the men who shall be honored of heaven, who have unspeakable peace with God within their souls today, and shall have the brightest crowns of immortality upon their brows tomorrow. The exactness of obedience is the very essence of obedience; let us keep to it, then.

III. But now, thirdly, **THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE IS GENERALLY A MIDDLE PATH**. "Turn not from it, to the right hand or to the left."

There is sure to be a right hand, there is sure to be a left hand, and both are probably wrong. There will be extremes on either side. I believe that this is true in 10,000 things in ordinary life, and also true in *spiritual* things in very many respects.

The path of truth in doctrine is generally a middle one. There are certain tremendous truths of God, such as divine sovereignty, the doctrine of election, covenant transactions, and so forth; and some men cast such a loving eye upon these truths that they desire to be, and are, quite blind to all other truths besides. These great and precious doctrines take up the whole field of their vision, while another and equally valuable part of God's

Word is either left unread, or else twisted around into some supposed reconciliation with the first-named truths. Then, again, there are others who think much of *man*. They have deep sympathy with the human race; they see man's sin and ruin, and they are much charmed with the mercy of God, and the invitations of the gospel which are given to sinners. They become so entranced with these truths in connection with the responsibility of man, and man's free agency, that they will see nothing else, and declare all other doctrines, except these, to be delusions. If they admit the doctrines of grace to be true, they think them valueless, but they generally consider them to be untrue altogether. It seems to me that the path of truth is to believe them both; to hold firmly that salvation is by divine grace, and to hold with equal firmness that the ruin of any man is wholly and entirely his own fault; to maintain the sovereignty of God, and to hold the responsibility of man also; to believe in the free agency of both God and man; neither to dishonor God by making Him a lackey to His creatures' will, nor, on the other hand, to rid man of all responsibility by making him to be a mere log or a machine. Take *all* that is in the Bible, dear friends, to be true. Never be afraid of any text that is written by the sacred pen. Dear brothers and sisters, when you turn the pages over, I hope you never feel as if you wish that any verse could be altered; I trust you never desire that *any* text might be amended so as to read a little more Calvinistic, or a little more like the teaching of Arminius. Always stand to it that your creed must bend to the Bible, and not the Bible to your creed—and dare to be a little inconsistent with yourselves, if need be, sooner than be inconsistent with God's revealed truth. You will find the path of duty there, I think, to be neither to the right hand nor to the left. So I think it is in another respect, in which the tendency is to one of two extremes. Some people say of *ministers*, "These are God's priests; they can distribute divine

grace to us." Others cry out, "No, they do not, and cannot; we are all equally able to dispense the truth; we need none to instruct us; we are all of us to be pastors, or rather, to be sheepish enough to think we are." Now, there, I think, the safe path lies between the two. The minister is no priest, but still, God does enable some men, by His Spirit, to teach others. He does raise up pastors after His own heart. We will magnify the office, but we will not magnify it too much; we will not allow any to speak against it, for we believe it to be a God-sent gift. On the other hand, we will not slavishly prostrate ourselves before any man, however gifted he may be.

You will notice, in connection *with the ordinances of God's house,* one extreme about sacraments is that they are channels of divine grace. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are *saving* ordinances, according to certain ignorant people. The opposite extreme is to leave ordinances alone altogether, and to say there is nothing in them, and that it is of no use to attend to them. Surely the proper thing is to believe that, as acts of obedience, they are acceptable to God; and as signs and tokens of great spiritual truths, they are instructive and edifying to the saints, and therefore not to be neglected. In this matter, I would have you "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left."

So, too, I think it should be *in our general conduct.* With regard, for instance, to our words; the course of speech generally is, on the one hand to say too much, or on the other hand to say too little—to be silent when the wicked are before us, or else to be rash with our lips and betray a good cause through our rashness in defending it. There is a time to speak, and there is a time to be silent, and he who judges well will mark his opportunities and take the middle course. He will neither be talkative with advice that is not required, nor will he be cowardly and dumb when he ought to bear testimony for his Master. The same holds good with regard to zeal. We have some abroad

nowadays whose heads are very hot. They will be doing this, and that, and I know not what besides—all in the twinkling of an eye! They talk as if they would turn the world upside down, while it is their own brains that need first to be turned into a right condition. They promote revivals, but not revivals such as we would approve of—their revivals are blown up like bladders with mere human excitement and playing upon men's passions, and this brings true zeal into contempt. Theirs is a fire which burns down the house instead of burning in the grate, and warming the household! But shall we therefore not be zealous? God forbid! Shall we fall into the opposite extreme of those who fold their arms and say, "Why make this noise? God will do His own work; things will go well enough, let us be quiet, let us sleep as do others"?

Brothers and sisters, there is a middle course of true, sensible, prudent zeal—adhering to the truth of God and never believing that people can be converted by lies, however earnestly bawled into their ears; walking within the bounds of God's truth, and being persuaded that the best seed to sow is that which God puts into the basket of His word, and that sinners are not to be saved by rash statements nor by extravagant declamation, but that they are brought to Christ as they were of old, by the simple telling out of the story of the cross affectionately, and by the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Here, again, "turn neither to the right hand nor to the left."

Beloved, this is a point we must take care to observe *in the matter of our confidences.* Neither to the right hand nor to the left must the Christian turn with regard to the reliance of his soul, or in the matter of his eternal salvation. "None but Jesus" must be the constant watchword of our spirit. Some will call us in this direction, and some in that. The wrecker's beacons would entice us upon the rocks in a thousand directions, but let us

steer by the sun or by the polestar, and not trust to the treacherous guides of human fancy. Keep close to this, that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous." Rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and put all your reliance upon Him as crucified, risen, and pleading for His people. Settle it in your hearts that you are not to be led away from Jesus—

"Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

So in *the matter of faith itself,* let us keep the middle place. Let us not be as some are—presumptuous, and refusing to examine themselves, declaring that they *must* be right. Let us remember that—

"He who never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may too late."

Let us not fall, on the other side, into constant doubting, imagining that we can never be fully assured, but must always be raising the question—

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

Let us ask God to guide us into the middle path, in which we can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him

until that day." Let us pray for grace to be careful, watchful, prayerful, as much as if our salvation depended upon our own vigilance; relying upon the sure promise and the immutable oath, knowing that we stand in Christ, and not in ourselves, and are kept by the mighty God of Jacob, and not by any power of our own. This middle path, in which we turn not to the right hand of presumption, nor to the left hand of unbelief, is the path which God would have us tread.

This rule, too, for I might continue to apply it in scores of ways, will *also hold good with you in your daily life in the matter of your general cheerfulness or otherwise.* Some people never smile. Dear souls! They pull the blinds down on Sunday. They are sorry that the flowers are so beautiful, and think that they ought to have been whitewashed; they almost believe that if the garden beds were of a little more serious color, it would be advisable. I have known some, and some whom I very greatly respect, talk in this way. One good brother, whose shoelace I am not worthy to unloose, said, on one occasion, that when he went up the Rhine, he never looked at the rocks, or the old castles, or the flowing river—he was too taken up with other things! Why, to me Nature is a mirror in which I see the face of God! I delight to gaze abroad, and—

"Look through nature up to nature's God."

But that was all unholiness to him. I confess I do not understand that kind of thing; I have no sympathy with those who look upon this material world us though it were a very wicked place, and as if there were here no trace whatever of the divine hand, and no proofs of the divine wisdom, nor manifestations of the divine care. I think we may delight ourselves in the works of God, and find much pleasure in them, and get much advanced towards God Himself by considering

His works. That to which I have thus referred is one extreme. There are others who are all froth and levity, who profess to be Christians, and yet cannot live without the same amusements as worldlings; must be now at this party, and then at that; are never comfortable unless they are making jokes, and following after all the levities and frivolities of the world. Ah, the first is a pardonable weakness in which there is much that is commendable, but this is a detestable one of which I can say nothing that is good. The Christian, I think, should steer between the two; he should be cheerful, but not frivolous; he should be sustained and happy, under all circumstances have a friendly and a kindly word for all; he should be a man among men as the Savior was, willing to sit at the banquet, and to feast and rejoice with those who rejoice; but still he should be heavenly-minded in it all, feeling that a joy in which he cannot have Christ with him is no joy, and that places of amusement where he cannot take his Lord with him are no places of amusement, but scenes of misery to him. He should be constantly cheerful, happy, and rejoicing, and yet at the same time he should have a deep solemnity of spirit which removes far from him everything that is sacrilegiously light and trifling.

By the same rule *arrange your business.* Some men in business act in such a way that from morning till night they can think of nothing but business. I have had to mourn over some Christians who, when they have had enough, did not know it—when they were doing as much as they could do with health to their souls, and had no more need of gain, yet they must launch out into something else that would take away all opportunities of serving God's cause, and all time for reflection and thought, and would thus bring barrenness and leanness into their souls. Others we have to complain of, who do not work enough at their callings. They are at a sermon when they ought to be behind the counter, or they are enjoying a prayer meeting when

they ought to be mending their husbands' stockings. They go out preaching in the villages when they had better be earning money to pay their creditors. There are extremes, but the true Christian is diligent in business, and is also fervent in spirit, seeking to combine the two. The believer should be like one of old, "a just man and devout," not having one duty smeared with the blood of another duty. Having a due proportion of all the divine graces, he seeks in his life to follow out his calling as a man, as a parent, as a member of the church, or whatever else he may be.

IV. Now we shall close, and our last remark is, that **THE PATH OF RIGHT IS THE PATH OF TRUE PROSPERITY**.

Observe the last paragraph of the text: "That you may prosper where ever you go." Let no man be deceived with the idea that if he carries out the right, by God's grace, he will prosper in this world as the *consequence*. It is very likely that, for a time at least, his conscientiousness will stand in the way of his prosperity. God does not invariably make the doing of the right to be the means of pecuniary gain to us. On the contrary, it frequently happens that for a time men are great losers by their obedience to Christ. But the Scripture always speaks to us of the long run; it sums up the whole of life—there it promises true riches! If you would prosper, keep close to the Word of God, and to your conscience, and you shall have the best prosperity. You will not see it in a week, nor a month, nor a year, but you shall enjoy it before long. Hundreds have I seen, and I speak within bounds when I speak of that number, who in different times of dilemma have waited upon me, and asked my advice as to what they should do. Now, brothers and sisters, I have almost always noticed that those persons who temporize, or attempt to find a policy of going between, and doing as little wrong as possible, but still just a little, always blunder out of one ditch into another, and their whole life is a life of

compromises, of sins, and of miseries; if they do get to heaven, they go there slipshod, and with thorns piercing their feet all the way. But I have noticed others who have come right straight out, and torn away the cords which entangled them, and have said, "I will do the right, if I die for it." And though they have had to suffer (I could mention some cases where they have suffered for *years*, very much to the sorrow of him who gave them the advice upon which they acted, not because he regretted giving them the advice, but regretted that they had to suffer), yet always there has been a turn somewhere or other, and by-and-by they have had to say, "I thank God after all, notwithstanding all my crosses and losses, that I was led to be faithful to my convictions, for I am a *happier* man, if not a richer man." In some cases they have absolutely been *richer* men, for after all, even in this world, "honesty is the best policy." It is a very low way of looking at it, but right and righteousness do, in the end, in the long run, get the respect and the esteem of men. The thief, though he takes a short way to get rich, yet takes such a dangerous way that it does not pay; but he who walks straight along the narrow road shall find it to be the shortest way to the best kind of prosperity, both in this world and in that which is to come.

If not, beloved, if we get no outward prosperity here, I trust you and I, if we love Christ, and are filled with His Spirit, can do without it. Well, if we must be poor, it will soon be over, and in heaven there shall be no poverty. Well, if we must fight for it, in order to maintain our conscience, remember we did not expect to come into this world that we might—

"Be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease."

If it must come to this, that we must suffer hunger and even nakedness itself, we shall not be worse off than the apostles—better men than we; we shall not be brought lower than the martyrs—with whose names we are not worthy to have ours coupled. Let us, then, run all risks for Christ. He is no soldier who cannot die for his country; he is no Christian who cannot lose his life for Christ. We must be willing to give up all things rather than sell the truth of God or sell the right, and if we come to this, we shall have such courage within our spirits, such a quiet consciousness of the presence of God the Holy Spirit, and such sweet smiles from the once suffering, but now reigning Savior, that we shall have to bless God all our days for these light afflictions which are but for a moment, which shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

I may not have spoken much to the comfort of God's people, but I shall be glad if I have said only half a word that may tend to nurture in the midst of our church earnest obedience, practical piety, real positive godliness carried out in ordinary life. We have plenty of doctrine, plenty of thinking, plenty of talking, but oh, for more holy acting! It is sickening to see the inconsistencies of some professors. It is enough, indeed, to make the world ridicule the church to see how many profess to follow Christ, and then keep any rule rather than God's rule, and obey anybody sooner than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, let us pray to God that our hearts may be sincere in the Lord's ways, and that we may be guided by His Spirit even to the end.

797 SPOTS IN OUR FEASTS OF CHARITY – JUDE 1:12

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Feb. 23rd, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear." — Jude 1:12

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Jude's Epistle]

WHEN THE CHURCH of God is extending her bounds rapidly, it is of the utmost importance that the growth should be real and permanent. If the walls of Zion are being built quickly, the master builders should keep an anxious eye upon the workmanship, lest the stones should be put together with untempered mortar and the whole erection should by-and-by fall to the ground. We desire not to grow up in a night, as the gourd, lest we also perish in a night. Our Lord Jesus, who is the great Shepherd of the sheep, sends to His churches, at times when they are most prospering, sad reminders of human frailty by which He warns them to, "take heed that they be not deceived; but see to it that they make sure work, and build substantially, with gold, silver, and precious stones, and not with wood, and hay, and stubble." It is a very doleful season for the church of God when everything is asleep, but there are dangers connected even with activity. When a man is under the intense excitement of earnest endeavor for Christ, it is possible

that much within him may be spurious, a mere fungus growth forced out by heat, and hence it is deeply necessary, as Jude says, to write unto the saints, and to speak unto believers concerning this thing, that they be sound, true, real, sincere and approved in the sight of God. Jude tells us in the text, and indeed in his whole epistle, that many who make a high profession are not what they profess to be, and that in the church of God, in her best estate, many are clouds without rain, trees without fruit, and wandering stars reserved for eternal darkness.

I. To come to the text at once, we have to remark from it that **WE MUST EXPECT TO FIND UNGODLY MEN IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**.

They ought not to be there—the church is bound to use her most earnest endeavors to keep them out, and, being in and being discovered, she should not be slow to cast them forth. She should put away wicked members and endeavor to preserve her purity; but for all that, there will never be a perfect church this side of the grave. They are without fault in the Canaan above, but a mixed multitude always will be mingled with the tribes of Israel while we are in this wilderness. We may look for this, in the first place, because *it has always been so.* If even in the paradise of God among perfect beings, sin intruded, how much more in our imperfect assemblies where every man's heart is naturally deceitful? The very first human family had a Cain in it that, on the day of solemn sacrifice, came to God's altar although he was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. When, after a solemn judgment, the earth had been purged, and a little church of only eight members was gathered in the Ark, there was among them one of whom the patriarch said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be." Ham was in the Ark an ungodly reprobate, though surrounded by saints. When the Lord had been pleased, according to the

election of divine grace, to take Abraham from among mankind, and set apart both him and his household, we read of Ishmael who mocked Isaac. In Isaac's family we hear of profane Esau. However few may be the chosen, there is sure to be some connected with them who are *with* them, but not *of* them. The people who were eminently typical of the church of Christ, I mean Israel in the wilderness, were polluted in the same manner—no matter how strict might be its regulations, and how earnest might be its leader—yet the rebellious murmured, the mixed multitude fell a lusting, and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were a root of bitterness. I need not take you through all the history of the Lord's people down to the coming of Christ, but wherever you may put your finger, you will be certain to discover the tares mingling with the wheat, and the serpent's seed nestling in the bosom of the elect household.

As for the days since the coming of our Master, this fact is painfully conspicuous. Our Lord had but 12 disciples who were near to Him, and yet He said, "I have chosen you 12, and one of you is a devil." The name of Judas will go down to eternity stamped with the curse, "It was better for that man that he had never been born." Afterwards, when Jesus had ascended, and the Spirit of God had been given, when the church had all things in common, and was in her first love, yet we read of Ananias and Sapphira who hypocritically pretended to have given their substance, when they had kept back much of it, and upon them the stern voice of Peter pronounced sentence of immediate death. So early were the liar and the hypocrite found within the gates of Zion; pristine purity could not utterly exclude the unworthy. Look again at the church in Samaria. The preaching of Philip had stirred the city, and a pretender to magic who had deluded the people, professed to become himself, a believer. He believed, it is said, and was baptized; but his heart was not right in the sight of God; his faith was not the

faith of God's elect. How solemn were the words of Peter to him, "You have neither part nor lot in this matter...For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity!" The hateful name of Simon Magus is another proof that the church of Christ, in her most zealous state, cannot expect to be clear of the basest of men. Our own observation and the history of any branch of the Lord's church will go to show the same thing. It is said that the emperor Frederick III once heard a courtier declare that he desired to go to a place where he should find no hypocrites. "Then," said his majesty, "You need to go beyond the frozen ocean, where there are no men; and if you should reach the place, there might be one hypocrite even there." It would be difficult to find any association of persons in which there are no unworthy individuals, and among those companies which are most select, you may frequently discover the worst of men.

Further, this might be expected to be so because of *the many inducements which exist to tempt unscrupulous men to assume the Christian name.* Few inducements, I grant you, existed when the stake, the axe, or death in the amphitheater were the only reward for following the Lord Jesus; but many inducements are there nowadays—when to be a Christian is to be respected, when the Christian profession introduces you into good society, secures you trust and credit in your business, and procures customers for your shop; when religion is altogether a most comfortable and respectable thing, it is no wonder that knaves adopt it. Persecution has not ceased—there are Christians who have to endure much of it; but, on the other hand, many make a good thing of their profession, and some cunning rogues have proved that they could not have adopted a better trick for succeeding in life than taking up the garb of piety. Do you wonder, therefore, if persons should be found who thrust themselves upon sacred ground, and brave all consequences of

future punishment? See yonder eagle, how it mounts. Does it care for the ethereal blue, or aspire to commune with the stars of heaven? Not a whit—such airy considerations have no weight with the ravenous bird; and yet you will not wonder that it soars aloft when you remember that it thus obtains a broader range of vision, and so becomes the more able to provide for its nest. It mounts towards heaven, but it keeps its eye evermore upon the outlook for its prey. No celestial impulse is needed; its love of blood suffices to bear it aloft. It soars only that it may flash downwards with fell swoop upon the object of its desires. Wonder not that men with the hearts of devils yet mount like angels—there is a reason which explains it all. That wild ass would not bray if there would be no fodder. Men would be less in a hurry to avow their pretended faith if there were no advantages to be gained. The rower in the boat sits with his back to the shore, but is all the while pulling towards it; many tug the oar towards the world which they pretend to have renounced. How many are like that famous painting of the olden time in which the artist depicted what seemed at a distance a holy friar with his hands crossed in devotion, and a book before him, looking like a saint indeed—but when you came close to the venerable impostor, you found that his hands, though clasped, enclosed a lemon, and instead of a book, there was a punch bowl into which he was squeezing the juice. Many an inn has an angel on the sign, and a devil for the landlord. Fair outside is often foul within. To seem to be answers men's purposes so well, that it is little marvel if pretenders swarm like the flies in Egypt's plague!

Moreover, brothers and sisters, we might have reckoned that there would be ungracious men mingled with the people of God, since *it is clear* to every thoughtful man that *this must be one of the craftiest designs of Satan.* In what way can Satan so seriously damage the church of God as by thrusting unworthy

persons into it? While men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, because the tares would take away the nourishment from the wheat and help to choke it, and prevent it from yielding so rich a harvest. The Greeks, outside the walls of Troy, were unable to storm the city, but after a long war they succeeded by using the stratagem of the wooden horse. Putting some few Greeks within the hollow monster, they pretended to flee, and left the horse to be dragged within the gates of Troy by the infatuated Trojans. In the dead of night, out came these traitor Greeks and opened the gates to their friends outside. Satan knows right well that one devil in the church can do far more than a thousand devils outside her bounds. He understands that all the blasphemers, and atheists, and free-thinkers, and so on that ever assailed the bastions of the church of God could not do one tenth as much mischief to her as those who pretend to be followers of the bleeding Lamb, and in secret are crucifying the Lord afresh, and putting Him to an open shame. If there are any here of this sort, and I fear there are, I do beseech you look to yourselves—you are cat's paws for the evil one, mean tools of the fallen spirit; blush to be so degraded. How sad to be a miserable skulker in the service of the prince of darkness! Better, surely, if honor is what you seek, to fight for Satan openly and avowedly; wearing the black plume and the diabolical uniform, than to be a base, cowardly assassin, sneaking into the ranks of the godly to stab them in the dark. None but pirates sail under false colors, and the yardarm is the best place for them. O you snake in the grass, you serpents who insinuate yourselves so craftily, how shall you escape the damnation of hell? That foul fiend, who now employs you upon his secret service, laughs in his sleeve as he foresees the triple bands of flame with which you will be bound forever. O that you could repent and turn from your base and

crooked ways, for otherwise your end will be terrible, and your doom eternal.

Further, my dear brothers and sisters, it is a very sad reflection that we may always expect to find ungodly men in the church of God, for numbers *come there, at first, through indifference.* I will excuse many, in some respects, for being found numbered with God's people though unconverted—I excuse them to some degree, for I believe that they were honest when at first they were added to the church. They were never saved, of course; but they thought they were. Never having had a true sense of sin, they nevertheless experienced some alarms, and they set down those alarms for repentance. Although they have never truly believed in the Lord Jesus, they have felt a degree of peace, and have come to look upon this treacherous calm as the result of true faith. They have never really received a new heart, still, there is a measure of reformation, and they mistake the outward for the inward. They were excited by the earnestness of God's people, and under a thrilling sermon they were made to feel as they had not felt before, and straightaway, the wish being father to the thought, they concluded they had passed from death unto Life while they still remained dead in trespasses and sin. At first, a few fears may have passed their minds, but by degrees, finding these fears uncomfortable, and Satan determining to blind their eyes and sear their consciences as with a hot iron, they at last made no further inquiries, but went straightaway onward to ruin with their eyes closed, believing that they were on the road to glory. It is said that a certain player had acted the part of Richard III so admirably, and had thrown his whole soul into it so thoroughly, that he imbibed the idea that he was actually a king, and he became so extravagant in his living, and withal so haughty in his behavior, that he brought himself first to contempt, and next to beggary. Doubtless there are many who at first were mere actors who at

last have grown into the conceit that the part which they have merely acted is a reality, and so they have continued to strut with all the pride of Pharisees till God has plucked the mask from off their wicked faces, and set them up to be butts for the arrows of eternal contempt. Oh, beware lest that should be our lot, lest, inadvertently to ourselves at the first, being mistaken, we should at last become miserable dupes and deceivers of others!

We might naturally expect to find hypocrites, formalists, and unconverted persons in the church of God because *human nature is bad enough for anything and everything.* If there is an evil which is detestable beyond all others, for that very reason will men run to it; nothing can be more evil than hypocrisy, nothing more base than to assume a character which is not properly your own, nothing more horrible than apostasy from plighted vows and promises; but for that very reason, he who knows the heart of man to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, might expect to find men rioting in such evil. There is no water so deep but fish will swim in it; no pond so foul but frogs will live in it; no mire so filthy but swine will wallow in it, and no sin so damnable but man will commit it. Men will even seek out ways and means of making themselves more and more proficient in the most evil of vices, each one competing with other men. The world is getting mightily accomplished in falsehood, and has learned to deceive in the most dexterous manner, and while professors of the art of hypocrisy are so numerous, there is no hope of the trade dying out. I expect to see great offenders, for I am told by inspired penmen that evil men and seducers will wax worse and worse. I expect as the ages roll on to see good men grow better, and bad men grow viler, for each age is in advance of its predecessor. If in these last ages there should arise monsters of iniquity exceeding Nero and Caligula in infamy, we must not be astonished, for long

practice of sin makes men proficient therein. The earth is ripening, and men's characters are rotting to the uttermost degree of corruption. This is the age of villainy, the chosen era of shams, lies, and hypocrisies, and we must expect to see more and more of the boiling over of the sink of iniquity which lies in human nature. Be not startled, if in these last days there should be seen whole herds of wolves in sheep's clothing, deceivers and defamers of the church, for even so have we been warned by the voice of God.

II. In the second place, **UNGODLY MEN DO SERIOUS MISCHIEF IN THE CHURCH OF GOD**.

We are told in the text that they are *spots* in our *agape*, or feasts of love. It is a solemn reflection that *they defile the church before God;* they are spots upon her face, they mar her beauty in the eyes of her heavenly friend. When the Lord looks upon His church in Christ, of course she is always fair, but when He looks upon her in *herself,* the defilements which came upon her through the ungodly provoke Him, and He is led to send chastisements upon her, and for a while, to withdraw the converting power of His Spirit, and the comforting power of His promises. Dear friends, we can little tell how much of evil may be brought upon any community by wicked persons in the midst of it, and we little know how much good may be kept back from the general body of the church of God by those ungodly professors who are living in uncleanness, and yet pretend to have fellowship with God.

They are *spots upon the church's sacrifice.* According to the Jewish law, no beast could be offered to God which was blemished. What an awful thing it is when a wicked man becomes a church member, and in public, as he prays in the name of the church, offers to God an unclean hypocritical prayer! What a filthy prayer that must be which comes from the lips of the man who is the slave of vice, and yet dares stand up

in the public sanctuary to lead the devotions of others! Can God bear such infamy? Must not the whole service be polluted thereby? Such a man at the Lord's Table! How he profanes the sacred feast! Such a man preaching, for there have been many such! How he dishonors the name of minister! Such a man passing round the sacramental cup! What despite to the precious blood! Why, I wonder, when I think of it, that such solemn feasts, since they have been, as far as such persons were concerned, deliberate mockeries—have not brought down the thunderbolts of God upon those who were engaged in them! It is an awful thing to have such loathsome sacrifices laid upon our altar in our name—truly; we knew not of the offenders' guilt, our sin was therefore a sin of ignorance. May the Lord have mercy upon us. When Joshua led his troops to Ai they were defeated, not for lack of courage, nor for lack of wit, nor for lack of armed men for the fight—they were put to the rout before their adversaries for no other reason than because Achan was in the camp, and had hidden in his tent the goodly Babylonian garment and the wedge of gold. Think me not severe if I speak with indignation of any who have turned aside unto crooked paths after standing high among the Lord's people—from my soul I pity such, I bewail them in my inmost heart, but yet for Christ's sake, and His people's sake, I feel towards them concerning their iniquity as Joshua did when he spared not the sentence, but adjudged the offender to his doom. Even though confession was made, yet every true-hearted Israelite cast a stone at the man who had made Israel naked before her enemies, saying, "Why have you troubled us? The Lord shall trouble you this day." The church must be purified and cleansed, for our Lord's fan is in His hands, and He will thoroughly purge His floor. He who winks at sin becomes a partaker in it. God would have us put away the unclean thing from the midst of us, lest we be utterly polluted, and become

an abomination in His sight. O you professors who are not living as you should live, you who are practicing secret sin, you members of the church who, unknown to us, are wallowing in evil, I do beseech you go forth from among us of your own accord, before the Lord launches out His plagues upon you. Get away from us lest double judgment fall upon you. As for us, when your case is clear, we dare not excuse you; we hate even the garment spotted with the flesh, and much more those filthy dreamers who wrap their lusts about them as a robe. If you have any reason left, you will surely prefer, if lost at all, to perish without incurring the double vengeance which awaits deceivers. Repent and forsake your iniquities that your sins may be blotted out, but if you will not do this, at least cease to dishonor the church of God by your false professions.

Furthermore, the ungodly in the Christian church do her mischief in the next respect because *they defile her in the eyes of the world,* "These are spots in your feasts of charity." They defile the Christian church in the judgment of onlookers. The world is always glad to find a stick with which to beat the church. It so thoroughly hates professors of godliness, that it only wants a chance to spring upon them as a lion upon his prey. As soon as one professor goes aside, men say, "Ah, just so! That is one herring out of the barrel; they are all alike." And yet if a man gets a bad shilling, he does not conclude that all shillings are bad. Men know that the existence of hypocrites does not prove that all Christians are such. They frequently say so, but they know better; you need not be in any hurry to answer them; they know that they lie in their throats when they declare all Christians to be deceivers, for they must know that there are hundreds who are not such, whose lives are pure and holy, and in every way according to their professions. They know that if they were to treat any body of men in the same way as they treat the church, they could not stand the test. Have there been

no thieves in the House of Commons? Are the members of our legislature therefore all rogues? Doubtless some of them have no honesty to spare; but are there no honorable men? Was there ever a club in the entire world without disreputable persons in it? Was there ever any association of men that might not be condemned, if the fool's rule was followed, of condemning the wheat because of the chaff? When with all our might and power we purge ourselves of deceivers as soon as we detect them, what more can we do? If our rule and practice is to separate the unholy as soon as we unmask them, what more can virtue itself desire? I ask any man, however much he may hate Christianity, what more can the church do than watch her members with all diligence, and excommunicate the wicked when discovered? It is a foul piece of meanness on the part of the world that they should allege the faults of a few false professors against the whole church—it is a piece of miserable meanness of which the world ought to be ashamed! Nevertheless, so it is, "Ha! Ha!" they say, "So would we have it! So would we have it!" The daughter of Philistia rejoices, and the uncircumcised triumphs when Jesus is betrayed by His friend, and sold by His traitorous disciple. O deceitful professor, will not the Lord be avenged upon you for this? Is it nothing to make Jesus' name the drunkard's song; nothing to make the enemy blaspheme? O hardened man, tremble, for this shall not go unpunished!

I must add here, that *this defilement falls upon us too.* We cannot mix with deceitful and wicked men without feeling conscious that we have been in contact with pitch, and have been defiled thereby. Who sits with a leper without danger of contagion? To talk over the sin of a false professor is injurious to the mind. We cannot deal with the sin of a brother, even in the way of discipline, without a degree of evil to our own hearts. I believe the reading of newspaper reports of criminal trials is

as instructive a school for iniquity as any the devil himself could have invented—and to go into details with the person before your eyes is even more so. When we read or hear of sin, whether we are conscious or not of the effect, there is always defilement left upon the mind. The church of God, being conscious of the contagion which a sinner leaves in the camp, should daily sanctify herself. Let us proclaim a daily repentance for the unknown sin among us. We are all as one body as soon as we join the Christian church, and in some sense the sin of one is the common fault of the whole. Leaven in one chamber is leaven in the house; the plague in one house is the plague in the city. We must not say, "Oh, I cannot help the fault of such a one." He is one with us: we must all be humbled before God when there is anything wrong in the case of anyone, for he is one of the family; was he not a member of the same body? Is not the whole body concerned in the sickness or sin of the least member? There should be a daily walking near to God, a daily seeking of mercy, a daily humbling, a daily coming to the precious blood of Jesus for Restoring grace, that so the defilement may be removed and the spots in our feasts of charity may be purged.

III. I come, thirdly, to a very important point. **THE UNGODLY IN THE CHURCH OF GOD ARE GENERALLY VERY MUCH AT THEIR EASE THERE**.

This head I trust may greatly comfort some who are afraid of sin by showing them that they are not hypocrites, *"Feeding themselves without fear."* These men have no right to come to the love feasts, have no business whatever in the communion of God's people, but there they were, without the slightest fear. They have no fear as to whether they are saved or not; they do not trouble their heads to examine—they take it for granted. They say, "Oh well, we are as good as other people," and so they carelessly dismiss all self-examination. They have no fear

about the present, they take all for granted, and let well enough alone. If accused of sin, they stand up and deny it, lying in the face of God's people without the slightest blush; they have no fear concerning the future, although running into present difficulty and ensuring to themselves eternal damnation. They have no bands either in life or death; they are unconscious of fear; they look the happiest of people, wearing a perennial smile, and looking the image of peace. I have seen the genuine child of God afraid lest he should not be truly regenerate, trembling and alarmed, conscious of his present imperfections, bemoaning them, often trembling because of temptations in the future, and afraid lest he might fall; fearful of death, and alarmed lest, after all, he should be a castaway; yet this trembler has been the genuine coin of God's realm about whom none were anxious but himself; while the base counterfeit has said, "Oh yes! I believe, I know I do; I am sure I am saved," while in his private life he is going from bad to worse, plunging himself into the sloughs of sin. My dear friends, seek after full assurance of faith, but do, do, do abhor anything like presumption. If your lives are not what they ought to be, I beseech you do not be too confident. "By their fruits you shall know them." If there are any of you living in sin, I do not care what doctrines you have received, or what experience you may boast, I am afraid for you if you are not afraid for yourselves. I entreat you, do not lull your souls into peace while your lives are ungodly, for it will be, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." You cannot be perfect, I grant, and salvation is not by works, but by divine grace, but at the same time, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Do I cut any of you sharply? I mean to cut: I only wish I could cut deeper, but my fear is that those who are the best will feel it the most. I know they will, and those who need

it most will say, "I am glad the preacher is faithful, but his censures do not apply to me." Remember Cowper's words—

"He who never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps he may, too late."

Heedless and Too-Bold fell into the ditch. He who is too sure with a carnal security that is not based upon the promise nor rested upon Christ, will sooner or later find himself compelled to make his bed in hell. I do wonder when I look at the text, that these people should feed themselves without fear at the feasts of charity. I suppose this may allude to the love feasts, but also to the Lord's Supper. How an ungodly man can drink the wine which typifies the blood of Christ when he is all the while crucifying Christ, I cannot understand. I cannot comprehend how he can break bread at the Lord's Table when he is spending his life with harlots, or gaining money by dishonesty. But sin is an incomprehensible thing. Oh, the depths of human sin! My dear friends, if any of you are exhibiting this hardness of heart, pray God that you may be forgiven; but I almost fear you never will, for if there is a sin unto death, surely it must be such a sin as this—when a man can come to the solemn feasts of God's house without fear, while he knows that his heart is rotten, and, as Bunyan says, only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinderbox.

I shall leave this point when I have read to you from "Pilgrim's Progress" a passage which struck me yesterday as portraying the deceiver's doom. "Now, when they had passed by a little way, they entered into a very dark lane where they met a man whom seven devils had bound with seven strong cords, and were carrying him back to the door that they saw in the side of the hill. Now good Christian began to tremble, and so did Hopeful, his companion, yet, as the devils led the man

away, Christian looked to see if he knew him, and he thought it might be one Turn-Away that dwelt in the town of Apostasy. But he did not perfectly see his face, for he did hang his head like a thief that is found. But being past, Hopeful looked after him, and saw on his back a paper with this inscription, 'WANTON PROFESSOR AND DAMNABLE APOSTATE.'" God grant that paper may never be put upon our backs, but by preserving grace may we be preserved to the last.

IV. I shall now conclude with the fourth point by asking this question—since it is clear that ungodly men are allowed to tarry for a while in the church of God, **WHAT IS GOD'S INTENTION THEREIN?** What is the lesson which He hereby delivers to you and to me this morning? That is our principal business—we have little to do with others, our business is with ourselves.

The first lesson is this—*God reminds every one of us of what we might have been but for His distinguishing grace.* Judas sells Christ, and his only reward is a halter to hang himself with. Why might not I have been Judas? Ananias dies with a lie in his throat—why might not *I* have been that unhappy man? Ask that question, Christian; is there any bitterness in your heart beyond the heart of Judas? Are you better than Ananias by nature? Is there any goodness in your constitution which would have kept *you* from their sin had you been left as they were? Judas was an apostle, mark you—a preacher, a miracle-worker—he dipped his hand with Jesus in the dish, and yet he sold Him—and why not you? Let not self-righteousness whisper, "Ah I never could have done so." How do you know that? Simon Peter said he never would forsake his Master, but before long, with cursing and oaths, he had denied Him. "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." What another man has done I may do; there

are no depths of wickedness into which I might not have plunged had not preventing grace stayed my course.

In the second place, *the Lord bids us make sure work for eternity.* If we know that fair houses have fallen down, let us build upon a good foundation. If the wind has swept away rotten boughs, let us see to it that we are quickened with the vital sap. If the knife has already removed sundry dead branches, be it our prayer that we may be found fruit-bearing boughs, vitally united to Christ. When I think of those whom I have known who have turned aside in years past in my ministry, I feel concerned to say to myself, "Have *I* really repented, or was it all a sham? Am *I* now resting upon the Rock of Ages, or have I a fictitious confidence, a delusive trust? Am *I* really right with God? Do I love Him? Am I serving Him, or am I, after all, fascinated by some gigantic imposture which is leading me astray to serve myself? My brothers and sisters, I beseech you dig deep for eternity. Either make it sure, or have nothing to do with it! The paint and the tinsel are worth nothing; the masquerading and the pageantry of a mere profession will all be scattered to the winds in the great day of wrath. Get gold, not gilt; get the real metal, not the imitation, lest at the last, when you shall most need comfort, you shall find yourselves drowned in despair! Surely that is God's voice to us. Hear it, learn its teaching; practice it thoroughly!

In the next place, should not the departures from the faith of some professors *put us on our guard against our own special temptations?* I do not know how you are, each one of you, employed in life, but I know this, that there is a precipice near every man's foot, and a snare in every man's path. You may not fall into the temptation which besets me, and I may never fall into that which besets you; but there is a lure for every bird, bait for every fish. I would have you especially take heed of those things in regard to which you have ventured to the very

edge. There are some things which are allowable up to a point; beware of going beyond the point. Yes, and beware of often going close to it, for the temptation is to go a little farther. Edged tools, long handled, wound at last. Beware of extraordinary temptations, watch against them. A child would generally stand on his feet in a gust of wind if he knew it was coming; but when the wind happens to come furiously round a corner, he may be taken off his feet. Mind you are well ballasted by prayer every morning before your vessel puts out to sea, or carrying the quantity of sail you do, you may be blown over upon the waves to your perpetual shipwreck. Watch constantly against those things which are thought not to be temptations. The most poisonous serpents are found where the sweetest flowers grow, and when Cleopatra would have an asp to poison herself, it was brought in a basket of fair flowers. Beware of arrows shot from a golden bow, or by a woman's hand. "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation." I feel as if I could go round among you, and take everyone by the hand, and say, "My brother and my sister, will you also go away?" Oh, if you would answer, "No, we will follow the Lamb wherever He goes," then I would reply in my Master's words, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Further—the lessons are many, but I will be brief upon each one—should not this make us *pray more for one another?* When a member of the church under my care has sinned, I have asked myself, "Did I always pray for that man?" That is a question for you also. Do you know of some sister in Christ who has dishonored the faith? You have known perhaps the temptation: did you ever pray for her— pointedly for her? Did you warn her affectionately of her danger? I am afraid the answer would have to be, "I am afraid I have not." But are we clear of sin in such a case; are our consciences quite void of offense; should not all the mischief in the Christian church say

to us, "Pray for one another, and by all means hold each other up"? Aid the tempted, remembering yourself also, lest you also be tempted. Whenever the enemy smites down one of the troops, the other soldiers should fill up the gap and stand together determined that the foe shall not kill another. Let every difficulty that comes to us only fuse us more completely into one, bring us into more compact squares and firmer battalions, determined that the enemy shall not get the advantage over us after all. Beloved, pray for one another: your heavenly Father bids you do so.

Whenever any of the ungodly are found in the church, she should labor with all her might *to be avenged on the powers of darkness,* by filling up the place of the ungodly with those who are really converted. I have often had my blood boil with sacred indignation within me when I have seen the finger of Satan hindering any of the works I have undertaken for God. Sometimes I have thought a church would be established in such a locality, and something has turned up of an evil kind which has put it out of the question. I have vowed in my soul, "Ah, Satan, I will get even with you for that, there shall be two churches somewhere else; you shall not gain an inch by driving me back in my Master's cause. I will take care that you shall gain nothing of me by all your opposition." Let the ungodly world laugh, and for its sneers we will smite it under the fifth rib with the sword of the truth. Let the enemy sneer, and for that we will discharge more arrows of God's word, we will pray more vehemently, and labor more diligently for the extension of the Lord's kingdom. The tactics of war should dictate this. The children of this generation would do so, and let them not be wiser than the children of light.

Lastly, dear friends, *should not this make us long for heaven?* Whenever you at any time are vexed by hypocrites and apostates, should you not at once sigh for the perfect church,

and the sweet fellowship of heaven where none can fall, and none deceive?—

"O heavenly Jerusalem,
Of everlasting hills,
Thrice blessed are the people
You store in your walls.
You are the golden mansion,
Where saints forever sing,
The seat of God's own chosen,
The palace of the King.
There God forever sits,
Himself of all the crown;
The Lamb the light that shines,
And never goes down.
Nothing to this seat approaches
Their sweet peace to molest;
They sing their God forever,
Nor day nor night they rest."

They are without fault before the throne. There shall be no more curses in the kingdom of their Father.

I have not spoken to you one-half as solemnly as my own heart has felt, but I do commend to you the serious considerations I have brought under your notice, and ask you in the name of the Lord Jesus who has suffered enough without being made to suffer in the house of His friends, by His wounds, by His blood, by all His grief and death throes—do not crucify Him afresh, and put Him to an open shame, but glorify Him in your lives, your words and acts, and so may the Lord do unto you of His great mercy. Amen.

798 SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER – LUKE 6:12

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, March 1st, 1868,
by the
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At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out to a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." — Luke 6:12

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Luke 6:1-19]

IF ANY MAN of woman born might have lived without prayer it was surely the Lord Jesus Christ. To us poor weak erring mortals, prayer is an absolute necessity; but it does not at first sight seem to be so to Him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In some parts of prayer our Lord Jesus Christ could take no share. As for instance, in that most important department, namely, personal confession of sin, He could take no portion. There were no slips in His outward life; there were no declensions in His inward heart. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" is a very suitable prayer for Him to teach us, but He could not use it Himself. Nor had He any need to pray against inward corruptions, seeing He was born without them. We wrestle hard each day with original sin, but Jesus had no such adversaries. It is as much as we can do, with all the weapons of our holy war, to keep down the foes of our own household, but

our Lord had no sinful nature to subdue. The inner life is a daily struggle with some of us, so that Paul's exclamation, "O wretched man that I am!" is exceedingly familiar to our lips, but our Lord said truly of Himself, "The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me." Moreover, our Lord had not to seek some of the things which are exceedingly necessary to His disciples. One desire which I trust is ever present with us is for growth in divine grace and for advancement in the divine life; but our Lord was always perfect in holiness and love. I see not how there could have been any advancement in purity in Him; He was always the spotless lily of innocence, incomparable, faultless, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Our Lord had no need to make self-examination each night. When He retired for prayer, there would be no need to scan the actions of the day or to detect shortcomings and flaws; there would be no necessity to investigate secret motives to see whether He might not have been actuated by sinister principles. The deep wellsprings of His being were not of earth, but altogether divine; when He bowed His knee in the morning, He had no need to pray to be protected from sin during the day. He went forth to His daily labor without the infirmities which we bear within us, and was free from the tendencies to evil which we bear about us. Tempted He was in all points as we are, but the arrows which wound us glanced harmlessly from Him. Yet mark carefully, although our glorious Master did not require to pray in some of those respects in which it is most necessary to us, yet never was there a man who was more abundant in prayer and in supplication, nor One in whom prayer was exercised with so much vehemence and importunity. He was the greatest of preachers, but His prayers made even a deeper impression on His disciples than His sermons, for they did not say, "Lord, teach us to preach," but they did exclaim, "Lord, teach us to pray." They felt that He was Master of that heavenly art, and at

His feet they desired to sit, that they might learn how to move heaven and earth with sacred wrestling. Brothers and sisters, since our sinless Lord was this mighty in prayer, does not His example say to us, with a voice irresistibly persuasive, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation"? You are to be conformed to the image of Christ—be conformed in this respect, that you be men of prayer. You desire to know the secret of His power with men—seek to obtain His power with God. You wish to obtain the blessings which were so copiously bestowed upon Him—seek them where He sought them, find them where He found them. If you would adorn His doctrine and increase His kingdom, use the weapon of all-prayer which ensures victory to all who use it as the Captain did.

Although our Lord Jesus Christ was most constant in His perpetual devotions; yet devout men are used to set apart times for extraordinary supplication. A man, who does not pray regularly, is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray specially. Who would care to live in a miser's house that starved you all the year round, except that now and then on a feast day he fed you daintily? We must not be miserly in prayer, neglecting it regularly, and only abounding in it on particular occasions when ostentation, rather than sincerity, may influence us. But even he who keeps a bounteous table sometimes spreads a more luxurious feast than at other times, and even so must we, if we habitually live near to God, select our extraordinary seasons in which the soul shall have her fill of fellowship. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the text before us, has set us an example of extraordinary devotion, supplying us with all the details and minutiae of the exercise.

Notice *the place* which He selected for it. He sought the solitude of a mountain. He was so popular that He could not hope in any city or village to be free from innumerable followers; He was so great a benefactor that He could never be

without sick folk entreating healing at His hands. He knew no leisure, no, not so much as to eat bread, and therefore, to obtain a little respite, He sought the hollow of some lofty hill where foot of man could not profane His loneliness. If you would draw near to God in an extraordinary manner, you must take care to be entirely undisturbed. I know not how it is, but if ever one desires to approach very near to God, there is sure to be a knock at the door, or some matter of urgent business, or some untoward circumstance to tempt us from our knees. Is it so, that Satan knows how soul-fattening retirement and devotion are, and therefore, if he can by any method stir up friend or foe to call us out of our closets, he will surely do so? Here our Lord was beyond call; the mountain was better than a closet with bolted doors. Far off was the din of the city, and the noise of those who clamored with their merchandise; neither the shout of triumph nor the wail of sorrow could reach Him there. Beloved friends, carefully seek, if you can, a perfect solitude, but if not, reach as near to it as you can, and as much as possible keep out the sound and thought of the outer world.

Did not our Lord resort to the mountain in order that He might be able to pray aloud? I cannot speak for others, but I often find it very helpful to myself to be able to speak aloud in private prayer. I do not doubt but that very spiritual minds can pray for a great length of time without the motion of the lips, but I think the most of us would often find it a spur and assistance if we could give utterance to our cries and sighs, no one being present to hear. We know that our Lord was accustomed to use strong cries and tears, and these it would not have been desirable for a human ear to listen to. In fact, His natural modesty would have put Him under a restraint; He therefore sought mountains far away, that He might, in His Father's presence, and in the presence of no one else; pour out

His entire soul, groaning, struggling, wrestling, or rejoicing, as His spirit might be moved at the time.

Did He not also seek the mountain to avoid ostentation? If we pray to be seen of men, we shall have our reward, and a pitiful reward it will be—we shall have the admiration of shallow fools, and nothing more. If our objective in prayer is to obtain blessings from God, we must present our prayers unspoiled by human observation. Get alone with your God if you would move His arm. If you fast, appear not unto men to fast; if you plead personally with God, tell none of it; take care that this is a secret between God and your own soul—then shall your Father reward you openly. But if you gad about like a Pharisee, and sound your trumpet in the corner of the streets, you shall go where the Pharisee has gone—where hypocrites feel forever the wrath of God.

Jesus, therefore, to prevent interruption, to give Himself the opportunity of pouring out His whole soul, and to avoid ostentation, sought the mountain. What a grand oratory for the Son of God! What walls would have been so suitable? What room would have worthily housed so mighty an Intercessor? The Son of God most fittingly entered God's own glorious temple of nature when He would commune with heaven. Those giant hills, and the long shadows cast by the moonlight were alone worthy to be His companions. No pomp of gorgeous ceremony can possibly have equaled the glory of nature's midnight on the wild mountain's side where the stars, like the eyes of God, looked down upon the Worshipper, and the winds seemed as though they would bear the burden of His sighs and tears upon their willing wings. Samson, in the temple of the Philistines, moving the giant pillars, is a mere dwarf compared with Jesus of Nazareth moving heaven and earth, as He bows Himself alone in the great temple of Jehovah!

For purposes of extraordinary devotion, the time selected by our Master is also a lesson to us. He chose the silent hours of night. Now, it may so happen, that if we *literally* imitated Him, we might altogether miss our way, for, no doubt, He chose the night because it was most convenient, congenial, and in every way appropriate. To some of us the night might be most inappropriate and unsuitable; if so, we must by no means select it, but must follow our Lord in the spirit rather than in the letter. We should give to heavenly things that part of the day in which we can be most quiet—those hours which we can most fairly allot to it without despoiling our other duties of their proper proportion of time. By day, our Savior was preaching; He could not cease from preaching even to spend the day in prayer. By day the multitude needed healing; our Lord would not suspend His benevolent work for His private communions. We are to take care never to present one duty to God stained with the blood of another, but to balance and proportion our different forms of service, so that our life-work may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. Usually, however, night will be the favored season for wrestling Jacobs. When every man had gone to his own home to rest, the Man of Nazareth had a right to seek His solace where best He could, and if sleep refreshed others, and prayer more fully refreshed Him, then by all means let Him pray. Against this not a dog shall move his tongue. Set apart for remarkably protracted intercession seasons which answer to this description, when the time is your own, not your employer, your own, not your families, not pilfered from family devotion, not abstracted from the public assembly or Sunday school, the time of quiet when all around you is in repose, the time congenial to solemnity, and the awe of a spirit hushed into reverent subjection, yet uplifted to rapt devotion. Such time, with many, may be the night, with others it may be the day; let sanctified common sense be your direction.

Again, our Lord sets us a good example in the matter of extraordinary seasons of devotion in *the protracted character of His prayer*. He continued all night in prayer. I do not think that we are bound to pray long as a general rule. I am afraid; however, there is no great need to make the remark, for most of Christians are short enough, if not far too short in private worship. By the aid of the Holy Spirit, it is possible to throw by holy energy and sacred zeal as much prayer into a few minutes as into many hours, for prevalent prayer is not measured by God by the yard or by the hour. Force is its standard rather than length. When the whole soul groans itself out in half-a-dozen sentences there may be more real devotion in them than in hours of mere wire drawing and word spinning. True prayer is the soul's mounting up to God, and if it can ride upon a cherub or the wings of the wind, so much the better, yet in extraordinary seasons, when the soul is thoroughly worked up to an eminent intensity of devotion, it is well to continue it for a protracted season. We know not that our Lord was vocally praying all the time, He may have paused to contemplate; He may have surveyed the whole compass of the field over which His prayer should extend, meditating upon the character of His God, recapitulating the precious promises, remembering the needs of His people, and thus arming Himself with arguments with which to return to wrestle and prevail.

How very few of us have ever spent a whole night in prayer, and yet what gifts we might have had for such asking! We little know what a night of prayer would do for us, its effect we can scarcely calculate. One night alone in prayer might make us new men, changed from poverty of soul to spiritual wealth, from trembling to triumph. We have an example of it in the life of Jacob. Previously the crafty shuffler, always bargaining and calculating, unlovely in almost every respect, yet one night in prayer turned the supplanter into a prevailing prince, and robed

him with celestial grandeur. From that night he lives on the sacred page as one of the nobility of heaven. Could not we, at least now and then, in these weary earthbound years, hedge about a single night for such enriching traffic with the skies? What? Have we no sacred ambition? Are we deaf to the yearnings of divine love? Yet, my brothers and sisters, for wealth and for science, men will cheerfully quit their warm couches, and cannot we do it now and then for the love of God and the good of souls? Where is our zeal, our gratitude, our sincerity? I am ashamed while I thus upbraid both myself and you. May we often tarry at Jabbok, and cry with Jacob, as he grasped the angel—

"With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day."

Surely, brothers and sisters, if we have given whole days to folly, we can afford a space for heavenly wisdom. Time was when we gave whole nights to chambering and wantonness, to dancing and the world's revelry; we did not tire then; we were chiding the sun that he rose so soon, and wishing the hours would lag awhile that we might delight in wilder merriment, and perhaps deeper sin. Oh, why should we weary in heavenly employments? Why do we grow weary when asked to watch with our Lord? Up, sluggish heart, Jesus calls you! Rise and go forth to meet the heavenly friend in the place where He manifests Himself.

Jesus has further instructed us in the art of special devotion by *the manner of His prayer*. Notice He continued all night in prayer *to God—to God*. How much of our prayer is not prayer *to God* at all! It is nominally so, but it is really a muttering to the wind, a talking to the air, for the presence of God is not realized by the mind. "He that comes to God must believe that He is,

and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him." Do you know what it is, mentally, to lay hold upon the great unseen one, and to talk with Him as really as you talk to a friend whose hand you grip? How heavenly to speak right down into God's ear, to pour your heart directly into God's heart, feeling that you live in Him as the fish live in the sea, and that your every thought and word are discerned by Him. It is true pleading when the Lord is present to you, and you realize His presence, and speak under the power and influence of His divine overshadowing. That is to pray indeed, but to continue all night in such a frame of mind is wonderful to me, for I must confess, and I suppose it is your confession too, that if for a while I get near to God in prayer, yet distracting thoughts will intrude, the ravenous birds will come down upon the sacrifice, the noise of archers will disturb the songs at the place of drawing of water. How soon do we forget that we are speaking to God, and go on mechanically pumping up our desires, perhaps honestly uttering them, but forgetting to whom they are addressed! Oh, were He not a gracious God, the imperfection of our prayers would prevent so much as *one* of them ever reaching His ear; but He knows our frailty, and takes our prayers, not as what they are, but as what we mean them to be, and beholding them in Jesus Christ, He accepts both us and them in the Beloved. Let us learn from our Master to make our prayers distinctly and directly appeals to God. That gunner will do no service to the army who takes no aim, but is content as long as he does but fire; that vessel makes an unprofitable voyage which is not steered for a port, but is satisfied to sail here and there. We must direct our prayers to God, and maintain soul-fellowship with Him, or our devotion will become a nullity, a name for a thing which is not.

The Ethiopic translation reads, "In prayer *with God."* Truly this is the highest order of prayer, and though the translation

may be indefensible, the meaning is correct enough, for Jesus was eminently with God all night. To pray with God—do you know what that is? To be the echo of Jehovah's voice! To desire the Lord's desires, and long with His longings! This is a gracious condition to be in, when the heart is a tablet for the Lord to write upon, a coal blazing with celestial fire, a leaf driven with the heavenly wind! Oh, to be absorbed in the divine Will, having one's whole mind swallowed up in the mind of God! This for a whole night would be blessed—this forever bliss itself.

Note too, that some have translated the passage, "in the prayer *of God."* This is probably an incorrect translation, though Dr. Gill appears to endorse it, and it brings out a precious meaning. The most eminent things were in the Hebrew language ascribed to God, so that by it would be meant the noblest prayer, the most intense prayer, and the most vehement prayer, a prayer in which the whole man gathers up his full strength, and spends it in an agony before the eternal throne. Oh, to pray like that! The great, deep, vehement prayer of God! Brothers and sisters, I am afraid that as a rule in our prayer meetings, we are much too decorous, and even in our private prayers feel too much the power of formality. Oh, how I delight to listen to a brother who talks to God simply and from his heart; and I must confess I have no small liking to those rare old-fashioned Methodist prayers, which are now quite out of date. Our Methodist friends, for the most part, are getting too fine and respectable nowadays, too genteel to allow of prayers such as once made the walls to ring again. O for a revival of those glorious violent prayers which flew like hot shot against the battlements of heaven! O for more moving of the posts of the doors in vehemence—more thundering at the gates of mercy! I would sooner attend a prayer meeting where there were groans and cries all over the place, and cries and shouts

of "Hallelujah!" than be in your polite assemblies where everything is dull as death, and decorous as the whitewashed sepulcher. O for more of the prayer of God, the whole body, soul and spirit working together, the whole man being stirred up to the highest pitch of intensity to wrestle with the Most High! Such, I have no doubt, was the prayer of Jesus on the cold mountain's side.

Once more, we may learn from Jesus our Lord *the occasion* for special devotion. At the time when our Master continued all night in prayer He had been upbraided by the Pharisees. He fulfilled the resolve of the man after God's own heart. "Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Your precepts." So David did, and so did David's Lord. The best answer to the slanderers of the ungodly is to be more constant in communion with God. Now, has it been so with any of you? Have you been persecuted or despised? Have you passed through any unusual form of trial? Then celebrate an unusual season of prayer. This is the alarm bell which God rings. Hasten to Him for refuge. See to it that in this, your time of trouble, you betake yourself to the mercy seat with greater diligence.

Another reason is also noticed in the context. Christ had said to His disciples, "Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." What He told them to do He would be sure to do Himself. He was just about to choose 12 apostles, and before that solemn act of ordination was performed, He sought power for them from the Most High. Who can tell what blessings were vouchsafed to the 12, in answer to that midnight intercession? If Satan fell like lightning from heaven, Jesus' prayer did it rather than the apostles' preaching. So, Christian, if you enter upon a new enterprise, or engage in something that is weightier and more extensive than what you have done before, select a

night or a day, and set it apart for special communion with the Most High. If you are to pray, you must work, but if you are to work, you must also pray. If your prayer without your work will be hypocrisy, your work without your prayer will be presumption; so see to it that you are especially in supplication when especially in service. Balance your praying and working, and when you have reached the full tale of the one, do not diminish any of the other. To any man here who asks me, "When should I give myself especially to a protracted season of prayer?" I would answer, those occasions will frequently occur. You should certainly do this when about to join the church. The day of your public profession of faith should be altogether a consecrated day. I remember rising before the sun to seek my Master's presence on the day when I was buried with Him in baptism. It seemed to me a solemn ordinance not to be lightly undertaken, or flippantly carried out; a duty which, if done at all, should be performed in the most solemn and earnest manner. What is baptism without fellowship with Christ? To be buried in baptism, but not *with Him,* what is it? I would say to you young people who are joining the church now, mind you do not do it thoughtlessly, but in coming forward to enlist in the army of Christ, set apart a special season for self-examination and prayer. When you arrive at any great change of life do the same. Do not enter upon marriage, or upon emigration, or upon starting in business, without having sought a benediction from your Father who is in heaven. Any of these things may involve years of pain, or years of happiness to you; seek, therefore, to have the smile of God upon what you are about to do. Should you not also make your times of peculiar trial to be also times of special prayer? Wait upon God now that the child is dying. Wrestle with Him as David did about the child of Bathsheba. Draw near to God with fasting and prayer for a life that is especially dear to you if perhaps it may

be preserved. And when the axe of death falls, and the tree beneath which you found shelter is cut down, then again, before the grave is closed, and the visitation is forgotten, draw near to God with sevenfold earnestness; and if you have been studying the Word of God, and cannot master a passage of Scripture, if some truth of revelation staggers you, now again is a time to set yourself like Daniel by prayer and supplication to find out what is the meaning of the Lord in the book of His prophecy. Indeed, such occasions will often occur to you who are spiritual, and I charge you by the living God, if you would be rich in divine grace, if you would make great advances in the divine life, if you would be eminent in the service of your Master, attend to these occasions, get an hour alone, an hour, yes, two hours a day if you can, and go not away from the Master's presence till your face is made to shine as once the face of Moses did, when he had been long upon the mount alone with God.

And now having thus brought out the example of Christ as well as I can, I want to make an application of the subject to this church which at this juncture has set apart a long season for special devotion. My words shall be few, but I earnestly desire that God may make them weighty to each member of this church.

A church, in order to have a blessing upon its special times of prayer, must abound in constant prayer at other times. I do not believe in spasmodic efforts for revival. There should be special occasions, but these should be the outgrowths of ordinary, active, healthy vigor. To neglect prayer all the year round, and then to celebrate a special week—is it much better than hypocrisy? To forsake the regular prayer meetings, but to come in crowds to a special one—what is this? Does it not betray superficiality or the effervescence of mere excitement? The church ought always to pray. prayer is to her what salt and

bread are to our tables; No matter what the meal, we must have salt and bread there, and no matter what the church's engagements, she must have her regular constancy of prayer. I think that in London our churches err in not having morning and evening prayer daily in every case where the church is large enough to maintain it. I am glad that our zealous brothers and sisters have here for some years maintained that constant prayer. I am thankful that in this church I cannot find much fault with you for non-attendance at the prayer meetings; there are some of you who never come, and I suppose you are such poor things that you are not of much good whether you come or stay away; but on the whole the most of the people who fear God in this place are abundant in their attendance at the means of divine grace, not to be blamed in any measure whatever for forsaking the assembling of themselves together, for they do draw near to God most regularly; and such prayer meetings have we every Monday, as I fear are not to be found anywhere else. But we must see to it that we keep this up, and moreover, those who are lax and lagging behind, must ask forgiveness of their heavenly Father, and endeavor henceforth to be more instant in supplication.

If, brothers and sisters, *men* ought always to pray and not to faint, much more should *Christians!* Jesus has sent His church into the world on the same errand upon which He Himself came, and that includes intercession. What if I say that the church is the world's priest? Creation is dumb, but the church is to find a mouth for it. Ungodly men are dumb of heart and will, but we who have the will and the power to intercede, dare not be silent. It is the church's privilege to pray. The door of divine grace is always open for her petitions, and they never return empty-handed. The veil was torn for her, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar for her, and God constantly invites her. Will she refuse the privilege which angels might envy her? Is

not the church the bride of Christ? May she not go in unto her King at any time, at every time? Shall she allow the precious privilege to be unused? The church ever has need for prayer. There are always some in her midst who are declining, and frequently those who are falling into open sin. There are the lambs to be prayed for that they may be carried in Christ's bosom; there are the strong to be prayed for lest they grow presumptuous, and the weak lest they become despairing. In such a church as this is, if we kept up prayer meetings 24 hours in the day, 365 days in the year, we might never be without a special subject for supplication. Are we ever without the sick and the poor? Are we ever without the afflicted and the wavering? Are we ever without those who are seeking the conversion of their relatives, the reclaiming of backsliders, or the salvation of the depraved? No, with such congregations constantly gathering, with such a densely peopled neighborhood, with three million sinners around us, the most part of them lying dead in trespasses and sins, with such a country beginning to be benighted in superstition, over whom the darkness of Romanism is certainly gathering, in a world full of idols, full of cruelties, full of devilries—if the church does not pray, how shall she excuse her base neglect of the command of her loving Lord and covenant head? Let this church then be constant in supplication.

There should be frequent prayer meetings; these prayer meetings should be constantly attended by all. Every man and woman should make it a point of duty to come as often as possible to the place where prayer is known to be made. I wish that all throughout this country the prayers of God's churches were more earnest and constant. It might make a man weep tears of blood to think that in our Dissenting churches in so many cases the prayer meetings are so shamefully attended. I could indicate places that I know of, situated not many miles

from where we now stand, where there are sometimes so few in attendance that there are scarcely praying men enough to keep up variety in the prayer meeting. I know towns where the prayer meeting is put off during the summer months, as if the devil would take off during the summer! I know of agricultural districts where they always put off prayer during the harvest, and I make some kind of excuse for them because the fruits of the earth must be gathered in, but I cannot understand large congregations where the prayer meeting and lecture are amalgamated because there will not be enough persons coming out to make two decent services in the week. And then they say that God does not bless the word. How can He bless the word? They say "Our conversions are not as numerous as they were," and they wonder how it is that we at the Tabernacle have so large an increase month by month. Do you wonder, brothers and sisters, that they have not a blessing when they do not seek it? Do you wonder that *we* have it when we do seek it? That is but a natural law of God's own government, that if men will not pray, they shall not have; and if men will pray, and pray vehemently, God will deny them nothing. He opens wide His hands and says, "Ask what you will, and it shall be given to you." I wish our denomination of Baptists, and other denominations of Christians were greater believers in prayer, for this mischief of Ritualism and Rationalism which is coming upon us, this curse which is withering our nation, this blight and mildew which are devouring the vineyard of the Lord, has all come upon us because public prayer has almost ceased in the land as to its constancy, vehemence, and importunity! The Lord recover us from this sin!

But let the church be as diligent in prayer as she may on regular occasions, she ought still to have her special seasons. A thing which is regular and constant is sure to tire, so a little novelty is lawful; a little specialty may often tend to revive those who, otherwise,

would be given to slumber. The church should have her special praying times because she has her special needs. There are times when spiritual epidemics fall upon churches and congregations. Sometimes it is the disease of pride, luxury, worldliness; at other times there are many falling into overt sin. Sometimes a vile form of vice will break out in the very midst of the church of God; at other times it is a heresy, or a doctrine carried to excess, or ill will, or a lack of brotherly love, or a general lethargy. At such special times of trial a church should have her extraordinary prayer meetings; as also when she is engaging in new enterprises, and is about to break up new ground, she needs fresh strength, and she should seek it. Let her call her members together, and with heart and soul let them commend the work to God. There should be special seasons of prayer because the Holy Spirit prompts us to it. "I believe in the Holy Spirit," is a sentence of the Creed, but how few really believe it? We seem to fancy that we have no motions of the Holy Spirit now among godly men as before, but I protest before the living God that such is not the case! The Holy Spirit at this day moves in those who are conversant with Him, and who are content to regard His gracious monitions; and He prompts us to special fellowship. We speak what we know, we declare what we have tasted and handled. The Holy Spirit, at certain times, prompts us to come together with peculiar earnestness and special desires. And then, if this suffices not, God has been pleased to set His seal to special seasons of prayer, therefore they ought to be held. There have been more ingatherings, I was about to say, under special efforts of a month than under ordinary efforts of 11 months. I am sure that, last year, we saw very clearly God's blessing upon us during the month of February. All the year round—my dear brothers, the deacons and elders can bear me out in it—there were always cases coming forward who said, "We were decided for Christ

during the February meetings." God has always blessed the ministry here. I say it not to boast, but to the glory to God! I do not know of any sermon preached here without conversions, but yet those times of special meeting, those solemn assemblies, have always been a hundred-fold blessed of God, so that we have good reason to say we will continue them with renewed zeal, because the Lord is with them.

Now, brothers and sisters, I must have just a word with you upon another matter, namely, that *it should be our endeavor to bring power into these special meetings.* They are lawful; they are necessary; let us make them profitable. The way to do so is to draw near to God as Christ did. When He prayed, it was a son talking to his father, the Son of God talking with the Father God, and spilling out His heart in close communion. Come up tomorrow, my brothers and sisters, as sons and daughters of God to your Father; speak to Him as to one who is very near akin to you. There will be no lack of power if such is the case. Jesus drew near to God in His prayer as a priest, the High Priest making intercession for the people. You are all priests and kings unto God if you believe in Christ. Come with your breastplates on tomorrow. Come that you may intercede before the throne of God pleading the merit of the precious blood of Christ. There will be no flagging if everyone puts on his priestly miter. Jesus came before God with a burning zeal for His Father's glory. He could say, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." My brothers and sisters, burn and blaze with love to God! Wait upon Him this afternoon, let that be a special private season of prayer, and ask Him to teach you how to love Him, show you how to reverence Him, and fire you with an intense ambition to spread abroad the savor of His name. Jesus Christ drew near to God in prayer with a wondrous love to the souls of men. Those tears of His were not for Him, but for others; those sighs and cries were not for His own pangs, but for the sorrows and

the sins of men. Try to feel as Christ did; get a tender heart, an awakened conscience, quickened sympathies, and then if you come up to the house of God, the prayer meetings cannot be dull.

Seek to be bathed in the blood of Christ. Go, my brothers and sisters, to the wounds of Christ, and get lifeblood for your prayers. Sit down at Golgotha, and gaze upon your dying Lord, and hear Him say, "I have loved you, and given Myself for you." Then rise up with this resolve in your soul—

"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss,"

and go forward determined in His strength that nothing shall be lacking on your part to win for Him a kingdom, to gain for Him the hearts of the sons of men. If such shall be your state of mind, I am quite sure there will be power with God in prayer.

In closing, I shall say to you, we, above all the churches of this country, have a special need and a special encouragement to make our prayers things of power. For, in the first place, my brothers and sisters, what a multitude we now are! I often wish, though I beg to be pardoned of the Lord for it, that I had never occupied the position that I now fill because of its solemn responsibilities. I tell you, when I feel them, they crush me to the ground, and I can only manage to sustain my spirits by endeavoring to cast them upon the Lord. Why, 3,700 of you in church fellowship, or thereabouts, what can *I* do? Somebody complains that this sick one is not visited, or that that sinning one is not rebuked. How can I do it? How can one man, how can 20 men, how can a hundred men do the work? God knows I would, if I could, cut myself in pieces, that every piece might be active in His service. But how can we rule and minister fully

in such a church as this? God has supplied my lack of service very wonderfully; still, there are things that make my heart ache day and night, as well as other matters that make my soul leap for joy. O pray for this great church! Where our power utterly fails us, let us implore the divine power to come in, that all may be kept right. We need to pray, for some have fallen. We have to confess it with a blush that crimsons our cheek; some have fallen shamefully. O pray that others may not fall, and that the good men and women among us may be upheld by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

Think, my brothers and sisters, of the agencies which we are employing. If we do not pray for these, they will be so much wasted effort. Every week the sermons preached here are scattered by tens of thousands all over the globe—not in this language only, but in all the languages of Christendom are they read. Pray that God's blessing may rest upon the word which He has blessed before. Our sons, our young ministers whom this church has trained at her feet, are now to be counted by hundreds, scattered all over this country and elsewhere. Intercede for them! Forget not your own sons, turn not your hearts away from your own children whom God has sent forth to be heralds of the cross. In your Sunday schools, in your tract distributions, in your city missions, in your street preaching, in your offering of spiritual literature, in your orphanage—everywhere seek to glorify Christ. Do not, I beseech you forget the one thing necessary in all this. Do not be foolish builders, who will buy marble and precious stones at great cost, and then forget to lay the cornerstone securely. If it is worthwhile to serve God, it is worthwhile to pray that the service may be blessed. Why all this labor and cost? It is but offering to the Lord that which He cannot accept, unless by prayer you sanctify the whole. I think I see you as a church standing by the side of your altar with the victims slain, and the wood placed in

order, but there is as yet still lacking the fire from on high. O intercede you Elijahs, men of like passions with us, but yet earnest men, upon whose hearts God has written prayer, intercede mightily! Intercede till at last the fire shall come down from heaven to consume the sacrifice and to make all go up like a pillar of smoke unto the Most High!

I cannot speak unto you as I would. The earnestness of my heart prevents my lips uttering what I feel, but if there are any bonds of love between us; above all, if there are any bonds of love between us and Christ, by His precious blood, by His death-sweat, by His holy life, and by His agonizing death, I do beseech you to strive together with us in your prayers that the Spirit of God may rest upon us, and to God shall be the glory. Amen and Amen.

799 JESUS, THE EXAMPLE OF HOLY PRAISE – PS. 22:22-23

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, March 8th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You. You who fear the Lord, praise Him; all you the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all you the seed of Israel." — Psalm 22:22-23

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Psalm 22]

WE GREATLY ESTEEM the dying words of good men, but what must be the value of their departing thoughts! If we could pass beyond the gate of speech, and see the secret things which are transacted in the silent chambers of their souls at the moment of departure, we might greatly value the revelation, for there are thoughts which the tongue could not and must not utter, and there are deep searchings of heart which are not to be expressed by syllables and sentences. If, by some means we could read the inmost death-thoughts of holy men, we might be privileged indeed. Now, in the Psalm before us, and in the words of our text, we have the last thoughts of our Lord and Master, and they beautifully illustrate the fact that He was governed by one ruling passion—that ruling passion most strong in death was the glory of God. When but a child, He said, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's

business?" Throughout His work-life He could say, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." "It is My meat and My drink to do the will of Him who sent Me." And now, at last, as He expires with His hands and His feet nailed, and His body and soul in extreme anguish, the one thought is that God may be glorified! In that last happy interval, before He actually gave up His soul into His Father's hands, His thoughts rushed forward and found a blessed place of rest in the prospect that, as the result of His death, all the kindreds of the nations would worship before the Lord, and that by a chosen seed the Most High should be honored. O for the same concentration of all our powers upon one thing, and that one thing, the glory of God! Would God that we could say with one of old, "This one thing I do." And that this one thing might be the chief end of our being, the glorifying of our Creator, our Redeemer, the Lord of our hearts.

My objective, this morning, is to excite in you the spirit of adoring gratitude. I thought that as last Sunday we spoke of Christ as the example of protracted prayer—(See Sermon #798) it might seem seasonable at the end of a week of so much of God's mercy to exhibit Him to you as the example of grateful praise, and to ask you as a great congregation to follow Him as your leader in the delightful exercise of magnifying the name of Jehovah—

"Far away are gloom and sadness;
Spirits with seraphic fire,
Tongues with hymns, and hearts with gladness,
Higher sound the chords and higher."

I shall ask your attention, in considering these verses, first, to *our Lord's example:* "I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You,"

And, secondly, I shall invite you to *observe our Lord's exhortation;* "You who fear the Lord, praise Him; all you the seed of Jacob, glorify Him; and fear Him, all you the seed of Israel."

I. We begin with **OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE.**

The praise which our Jesus as our exemplar renders unto the eternal Father is twofold. First, *the praise of declaration,* "I will declare Your name unto My brethren"; and secondly, *the more direct and immediate thanksgiving,* "In the midst of the congregation will I praise You."

1. The first form of the praise which our blessed Mediator renders unto the eternal Father is that of *declaring God's name.* This, my dear friends, you know He did *in His teaching.* Something of God had been revealed to men before; God had spoken to Noah and Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, and especially to His servant Moses; He had been pleased to reveal Himself in different types and ceremonies and ordinances. He was known as Elohim, Shaddai, and Jehovah, but never until Christ came did men begin to say, "Our Father which are in heaven." This was the loving word by which the Well-beloved declared His Father's name unto His brethren. The sterner attributes of God had been revealed amidst the thunders of Sinai, the waves of the Red Sea, the smoke of Sodom, and the fury of the deluge; the sublimities of the Most High had been seen, and wondered at by the prophets who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; but the full radiance of a Father's love was never seen until it was beheld beaming through the Savior's face. "He that has seen Me," said Christ, "has seen the Father." But until they had seen Him, they had not seen God as the Father. "No man can come unto the Father," says Jesus, "Except by Me." And as no man can come affectionately in the outgoings of his heart or fiducially in the motions of his faith, so neither can any man come to God in the enlightenment of understanding except by Christ, the Son. He who understands

Christianity has a far better idea of God than he who only comprehends Judaism. Read the Old Testament through, and you shall value every sentence, and prize it above fine gold, but still you shall feel unrest and dissatisfaction, for the vision is veiled, and the light is dim; turn then to the New Testament, and you discern that in Jesus of Nazareth dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and the noontide of knowledge is around you, the vision is open and distinct. Jesus is the express Image of His Father, and seeing Him you have seen God manifest in the flesh. This sight of God you will assuredly obtain if you are one of the brethren to whom, through the Spirit, Jesus Christ in His teaching declares the name of the Father.

Our Lord, however, declared the Father more, perhaps, *by His acts* than by His words, for the life of Christ is a discovery of all the attributes of God in action. If you want to know the gentleness of God, you perceive Jesus receiving sinners and eating with them; if you would know His condescension, behold the loving Redeemer taking little children into His arms and blessing them; if you would know whether God is Just, hear the words of a Savior as He denounces sin, and observe His own life, for He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Would you know the mercy of God as well as His justice? Then see it manifested in the ten thousand miracles of the Savior's hands, and in the constant sympathy of the Redeemer's heart. I cannot stay to bring out all the incidents in the Redeemer's life, nor even to give you a brief sketch of it, but suffice it to say that the life of Christ is a perpetual unrolling of the great mystery of the divine attributes, and you may rest assured that what Jesus is, that the Father is. You need not start back from the Father, as though He were something strange and unrevealed, for you have seen the Father if you have seen Christ; and if you have studied well, and drunk deep into the

spirit of the history of the Man of Sorrows, you understand, as well as you need to, the character of God over all, blessed forever.

Our Lord made the grandest declaration of the Godhead in His death—

"Here His whole name appears complete,
Nor wit can guess, nor reason trace,
Which of the letters best is writ—
The power, the wisdom, or the grace."

There at Calvary, where He suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, we see the Godhead resplendent in noonday majesty, albeit that to the natural eye it seems to be eclipsed in midnight gloom. Would you see stern justice such as the Judge of all the earth perpetually exhibits (for shall not He do right)? Would you see the justice that will not spare the guilty, which smites at sin with determined enmity, and will not endure it? Then behold the hands and feet, and side of the Redeemer welling up with crimson blood; behold His heart broken as with an iron rod, dashed to shivers as though it were a potter's vessel; hearken to His cries, mark the lines of grief that mar His face, behold the turmoil, the confusion, the whirlwinds of anguish which seethe like a boiling caldron within the soul of the Redeemer! Here is the vengeance of God revealed to men so that they may see it and not die, may behold it and weep, but not with the tears of despair! At the same time, if you would see the grace of God, where shall you discover it as you will in the death of Jesus? God's bounty gleams in the light, flashes in the rain, and sparkles in the dew; it blossoms in the flowers that paint the meadows, and it ripens in the golden sheaves of autumn. All God's works are full of goodness and truth; even on the sea itself are the steps of the beneficent

Creator; but all this does not meet the case of guilty, condemned man. Therefore, to the eye of him who has learned to weep for sin, nature does not reveal the goodness of God in any such a light as that which gleams from the cross. Best of all is God seen as He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." "For God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Your thoughtful minds will readily discover every one of the great qualities of Deity in our dying Lord. You have only to linger long enough amidst the wondrous scenes of Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha, to observe how power and wisdom, grace and Vengeance, strangely join—

"Piercing His Son with sharpest smart,
To make the purchased blessing mine."

Beloved, in the midst of the brethren, a dying Savior declares the name of the Lord, and thus magnifies the Lord as no other can. None of the harps of angels, nor the fiery, flaming sonnets of cherubs can glorify God as did the wounds and pangs of the great Substitute when He died to make His Father's grace and justice known.

Our Lord continued to declare God's name among His brethren when *He rose from the dead.* He did so literally. Among the very first words He said were, "Go to My brethren," and His message was, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God." His life on earth after His resurrection was brief, but it was very rich and instructive, and in itself a showing forth of divine faithfulness. He further revealed the faithfulness and glory of God when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive. It must have been an august day when the Son of God actually passed the pearly gates to

remain within the walls of heaven enthroned until His Second Advent! How must the spirits of just men made perfect have risen from their seats of bliss to gaze on Him! They had not seen a risen one before. Two had passed into heaven without death, but none had entered into glory as risen from the dead. He was the first instance of immortal resurrection, "the first-fruits of them who slept." How angels adored Him! How holy beings wondered at Him while—

> "The God shone gracious through the man,
> And shed sweet glories on them all!"

Celestial spirits saw the Lord that day as they had never seen before! They had worshipped God, but the excessive splendor of absolute Deity had forbidden the sacred familiarity with which they hailed the Lord arrayed in flesh. They were never so near Jehovah before, for in Christ the Godhead veiled its killing splendors, and wore the aspect of a fatherhood and brotherhood most near and dear. Enough was seen of glory, as much as finite beings could bear, but still the whole was so sweetly shrouded in humanity that God was declared in a new and more delightful manner, such as made heaven ring with newborn joy!

What if I say that I think a part of the occupation of Christ *in heaven* is to declare to perfect spirits what He suffered, how God sustained Him, to reveal to them the covenant, and all its solemn bonds, how the Lord ordained it, how He made it firm by suretyship, and based it upon eternal settlements, so that everlasting mercy might flow from it? What if it is not true that there is no preaching in heaven? What if Christ is the preacher there, speaking as never man spoke, and forever instructing His saints that they may make known unto principalities and powers yet more fully the manifold wisdom of God as revealed

both in Him and in them—in them the members, and in Him the head? I think, if it is so, it is a sweet fulfillment of this dying vow of our blessed Master, "I will declare Your name unto My brethren."

But, brothers and sisters, it is certain that at this hour our Lord Jesus Christ continues to fulfill the vow by the *spreading of His gospel on earth.* Do not tell me that *the gospel* declares God, but that Jesus does not. I would remind you that the gospel does not declare God apart from the presence of Jesus Christ with the gospel. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," is the gospel's true life and power. Take Christ's presence away, and all the doctrines, and the precepts, and the invitations of the gospel would not declare God to this blind-eyed generation, this hard-hearted multitude, but where Jesus is by His Spirit, there is the word the Father declared. And, my beloved, this great process will go on! All through the present dispensation, Christ will declare God to the sons of men—especially to the *elect* sons of men, to His own brothers and sisters. Then shall come the latter days of which we know so little, but of which we hope so much. Then, in that august period there will be a declaration, no doubt, of God in noonday light, for it shall be said, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell among them." Of that age of light Jesus shall be the sun! The great revealer of Deity shall still be the Son of Mary, the Man of Nazareth, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; we shall, each one of us, tell abroad the savor of His name till He shall come, and then we shall have no need to say one to another, "Know the Lord," for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest; and know the Lord for this reason, because they know Christ, and have seen Jehovah in the person of Jesus Christ His Son.

I cannot leave this passage without bidding you treasure up that precious word of our Master, "I will declare Your name unto My brethren"—

"Our next of kin, our brother now,
Is He to whom the angels bow;
They join with us to praise His name,
But we the nearest interest claim."

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." "For both He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." The Savior's brethren are to know God in Christ; you who are one with Jesus, you who have been adopted into the same family, have been regenerated and quickened with His life, you who are joined together by an indissoluble union, you are to see the Lord. I said an indissoluble union, for a wife may be divorced, but there is no divorce of brethren. I never heard of any law, human or divine, that could ever "unbrother" a man; that cannot be done; if a man is my brother, he is and shall be my brother when heaven and earth shall pass away. Am I Jesus' brother? Then I am joint heir with Him; I share in all He has, and all that God bestows upon Him; His Father is my Father; His God is my God. Feast, my brothers and sisters, on this dainty meat, and go your way in the strength of it to bear the trials of earth with more than patience.

The example of our Lord, under this first head, I must hint at and leave. It is this—if the Lord Jesus Christ declares God, especially to His own brethren, be it your business and mine, in order to praise Jehovah, to tell what we know of the excellence and surpassing glories of our God; and especially let us do it to our kinsfolk, our household, our neighbors, and,

since all men are in a sense our brethren, let us speak of Jesus wherever our lot is cast. My brothers and sisters, I wish we talked more of our God—

"But ah, how faint our praises rise!
Sure 'tis the wonder of the skies,
That we, who share His richest love,
So cold and unconcerned should prove."

How many times this week have you praised the dear Redeemer to your friends? Have you done it once? I do it often officially; but I wish I did it more often spontaneously and personally, to those with whom I may commune by the way. You have doubtless murmured this week, or spoken against your neighbors, or spread abroad some small amount of scandal, or, it may be, you have talked frothily and with levity. It is even possible that impurity has been in your speech; even a Christian's language is not always as pure as it should be. Oh, if we saved our breath to praise God with, how much wiser! If our mouths were filled with the Lord's praise, and with His honor all the day, how much holier! If we would but speak of what Jesus has done for us, what good we might accomplish! Why, every man speaks of what he loves! Men can hardly hold their tongues about their inventions and their delights. Speak well, O you faithful, of the Lord's name; I pray you, be not dumb concerning one who deserves so much of you; but make this the resolve of this Sabbath morning, "I will declare Your name unto my brethren."

2. Our Master's second form of *praise* in the text is *of a more direct kind*—"In the midst of the congregation will I praise You." Is it a piece of imagination, or does the text really mean this, that the Lord Jesus Christ, as man, adores and worships the eternal God in heaven, and is, in fact, the great leader of the

devotions of the skies? Shall I err if I say that they all bow when He as Priest adores the Lord, and all lift up the voice at the lifting up of His sacred psalmody? Is He the chief musician of the sky, the Master of the sacred choir? Does He beat time for all the hallelujahs of the universe? I think so. I think He means just that in these words: "In the midst of the congregation will I praise You." As God, He is praised forever: far above all worshipping, He is Himself forever worshipped; but as Man, the Head of redeemed humanity, the ever-living Priest of the Most High God, I believe that He praises Jehovah in heaven. Surely it is the office of the Head to speak and to represent the holy joys and devout aspirations of the whole body which He represents.

In the midst of the congregations of earth, too, is not Jesus Christ the sweetest of all singers? I like to think that when we pray on earth our prayers are not alone, but our great High Priest is there to offer our petitions with His own. When we sing on earth it is the same. Is not Jesus Christ in the midst of the congregation, gathering up all the notes which come from sincere lips, to put them into the golden censer, and to make them rise as precious incense before the throne of the infinite majesty? So that *He* is the great singer, rather than we! He is the chief player on our stringed instruments, the great master of true music! The worship of earth comes up to God through Him, and He, *He* is the accepted channel of all the praise of the entire redeemed universe.

I am anticipating the day—I hope we are all longing for it—when the dead shall rise and the sea and land shall give up the treasured bodies of the saints, and glorified spirits shall descend to enliven their renovated frames, and we who are alive and remain shall be changed and made immortal, and the King Himself shall be revealed. Then shall be trod under our feet all the ashes of our enemies; Satan, bound, shall be held

beneath the foot of Michael, the great archangel, and victory shall be on the side of truth and righteousness. What a "Hallelujah" that will be which shall peal from land and sea and from islands of the far-off main—"Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigns!" Who will lead that song? Who shall be the first to praise God in that day of triumph? Who first shall wave the palm of victory? Who but He who was first in the fight and first in the victory, He who trod the winepress alone and stained His garments with the blood of His enemies, He who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah—surely He it is who in the midst of the exulting host, once militant and then triumphant, shall magnify and adore Jehovah's name forever and forever! Has He not Himself said it, "My praise shall be of You in the great congregation"?

What does that expression mean which is so hard to be understood, "Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father"? What does that dark saying mean, "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son of God also Himself be subject unto Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all"? Whatever they may mean, they seem to teach us the *mediatorial* crown and government are temporary, and intended only to last until all rule, and all authority and power are put down by Jesus, and the rule of God shall be universally acknowledged. Jesus cannot renounce His Godhead. But His mediatorial sovereignty will be yielded up to Him from whom it came, and that last solemn act, in which He shall hand back to His Father the all-subduing scepter, will be a praising of God to a most wonderful extent beyond human conception. We wait and watch for it, and we shall behold it in the time appointed.

Beloved friends, we also have in this second part an example—let *us* endeavor to praise our God in a direct manner. We ought to spend at least a little time every day in adoring contemplation. Our private devotions are scarcely complete if they consist altogether of prayer. Should there not be praise? If possible, during each day, sing a hymn. Perhaps you are not in a position to sing it aloud, or very loud, at any rate, but I would hum it if I were you. Many of you working men find time enough to sing a silly song, why cannot you find space for the praise of God? Every day let us praise Him when the eyelids of the morning first are opened, and when the curtains of the night are drawn. Yes, and at midnight, if we wake at that solemn hour, let the heart put fire to the sacred incense and present it unto the Lord who lives forever and ever. In the midst of the congregation, also, whenever we come up to God's house, let us take care that our praise is not merely lip language, but that of the heart. Let us all sing, and so sing that God Himself shall hear. We need more than the sweet sounds which die upon mortal ears, we need the deep melodies which spring from the heart, and which enter into the ears of the immortal God. Imitate Jesus, then, in this twofold praise, the declaring of God, and the giving of direct praise to Him.

II. My time almost fails me, and I have need of much of it, for now I come to the second head, **OUR LORD'S EXHORTATION.**

Follow me earnestly, my dear brothers and sisters, and then follow me practically, also. The exhortations of the second verse are given to those who fear God, who have respect to Him, who tremble to offend Him, who carry with them the consciousness of His presence into their daily lives, and who act towards Him as obedient children towards a father. The exhortation is further addressed to the seed of Jacob, to those in covenant with God, to those who have despised the pottage

and chosen the birthright, to those who, if they have had to sleep with a stone for their pillow, have, nevertheless, seen heaven opened, and enjoyed a revelation of God, to those who know what prevalence in prayer means, to those who, in all their trouble, have yet found that all these things are not against them, but work their everlasting good, for Jesus is yet alive, and they shall see Him before they die. It is, moreover, directed to the seed of Israel, to those who once were in Egypt in spiritual bondage, who have been brought out of slavery, who are being guided through the wilderness, fed with heaven's manna, and made to drink of the living Rock, to those who worship the one God and Him only, and put away their idols and desire to be found always obedient to the Master's will. Now, to them it is said, first, "Praise Him." Praise Him *vocally*. I wish that in every congregation every child of God would take pains to praise God with his mouth as well as with his heart. Do you know, I have noticed one thing—I have jotted this down in the diary of my recollection—that you always sing best when you are most spiritual. Last Monday night the singing was very much better than it was on Sunday evening. You kept better time and better tune, not because the tune was any easier, but because you had come up to worship God with more solemnity than usual, and therefore there was no slovenly singing such as sometimes pains my ears and heart. Why, some of you care so little to give the Lord your best music, that you fall half a note behind the rest; others of you are singing quite a false note, and a few make no sound of any kind. I hate to enter a place of worship where half-a-dozen sing to the praise and glory of themselves, and the rest stand and listen. I like that good old plan of everybody singing, singing their best, singing carefully and heartily. If you cannot sing artistically, never mind, you will be right enough if you sing from the heart, and pay attention to it, and do not drawl out like a musical machine that has been set and runs on

mechanically. With a little care the heart brings the art, and the heart desiring to praise will by-and-by train the voice to time and tune. I would have our service of song to be of the best. I care not for the fineries of music, and the prettiness of chants and anthems. As for instrumental music, I fear that it often destroys the singing of the congregation, and detracts from the spirituality and simplicity of worship. If I could crowd a house 20 times as big as this by the fine music which some churches delight in, God forbid I should touch it; but let us have the best and most orderly harmony we can make—let believers come with their hearts in the best humor, and their voices in the best tune, and let them take care that there be no slovenliness and discord in the public worship of the Most High.

Take care to also praise God *mentally*. The grandest praise that floats up to the throne of God is that which rises from silent contemplation and reverent thought. Sit down and think of the greatness of God, His love, His power, His faithfulness, His sovereignty, and as your mind bows prostrate before His majesty you will have praised Him, though not a sound shall have come from your mouth.

Praise God, also, by your *actions,* your sacrifice to Him of your property, your offering to Him, week by week, of your substance. This is true praise and far less likely to be hypocritical than the mere thanksgiving of words. "You who fear the Lord, praise Him."

The text adds, *"Glorify Him,* you seed of Jacob"—another form of the same thing. Glorify God, that is, let others know of His glory. Let them know of it from what you say, but especially let them know of it from what you *are*. Glorify God in your business, in your recreations, in your shops, and in your households. In whatever you eat and drink, glorify the Lord. In the most common actions of life wear the vestments of your sacred calling, and act as a royal priesthood serving the Most

High. Glorify your Creator and Redeemer! Glorify Him by endeavoring to spread abroad the gospel which glorifies Him. Magnify Christ by explaining to men how by believing they shall find peace in Him. Glorify God by yourself boldly relying on His word in the teeth of afflicting providence, and over the head of all suspicions and mistrust. Nothing can glorify God more than an Abrahamic faith which staggers not at the promise through unbelief. O you wrestling seed of Jacob, see to it that you fall not off in the matter of glorifying your God.

Lastly, the text says, *"Fear Him,"* as if this were one of the highest methods of praise. Walk in His sight; constantly keep the Lord before you. Let Him be at your right hand. Sin not, for in so doing you dishonor Him. Suffer rather than sin. Choose the burning fiery furnace rather than bow down before the golden image. Be willing to be despised sooner than God should be despised. Be content to bear the cross, rather than Jesus should be crucified afresh. Be put to shame, sooner than Jesus should be put to shame. Thus you will truly praise and magnify the name of the Most High.

I must close by a few remarks which are meant to assist you to carry out the spirit and teaching of this sermon. Beloved brothers and sisters, this morning I felt, before I came to this place, very much in the spirit of adoring gratitude. I cannot communicate that to you, but the Spirit of God can; and the thoughts that helped me to praise God were something like these—let me give them to you as applied to yourselves—glorify and praise God, for He *has* saved you, saved you from hell, saved you for heaven. Oh, how much is comprehended in the fact that you are saved! Think of the election which ordained you to salvation, the covenant which secured salvation to you; think of the incarnation by which God came to you, and the precious blood by which you now have been made near to God. Hurry not over those thoughts though I

must shorten my words. Linger at each one of these sacred fountains and drink, and when you have seen what salvation involves in the past, think of what it means in the future. You shall be preserved to the end; you shall be educated in the school of divine grace; you shall be admitted into the home of the blessed in the land of the hereafter. You shall have a resurrection most glorious, and an immortality most illustrious. When days and years are passed, a crown shall adorn your brow, a harp of joy shall fill your hand. All this is yours, believer; and will you not praise Him? Make any one of them stand right out, as real to you personally, and I think you will say, "If I refuse to sing, surely the very stones would speak." Your God has done more than this for you. You are not just barely saved, like a drowning man just dragged to the bank; you have had more given you than you ever lost. You have been a gainer by Adam's fall. You might almost say, as one of the fathers did, *O beata culpa,* "O happy fault," which put me into the position to be as richly endowed as I now am! Had you stood in Adam, you had never been able to call Jesus, "Brother," for there had been no need for Him to become incarnate; you had never been washed in the precious blood, for then it had no need to be shed. Jesus has restored that to you which He took not away. He has not merely lifted you from the dunghill to set you among men, but to set you among princes, even the princes of His people. Think of the bright roll of promises, of the rich treasure of covenant provision, of all that you have already had, and all that Christ has guaranteed to you of honor, and glory, and immortality—and will you not in the midst of the congregation praise the Lord? Brothers and sisters some of us have had special cause for praising God in the fact that we have seen many saved during the last three weeks, and among them those dear to us. Mothers, can you hear the fact without joy? Your children saved! Brothers, your sisters saved! Fathers, your sons

and daughters saved! How many has God brought in during the last few weeks? And you Sunday school teachers who have been the instruments of this, you conductors of our classes who have been honored of God to be spiritual parents, you elders and deacons who have helped us so nobly, and who have now to share the joy of the pastor's heart in these conversions—will you not bless God? "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be praise." But oh, we cannot be silent; not one tongue shall be silent; we will all magnify and bless the Most High.

Brothers and sisters, if these do not suffice to make us praise Him, I would say, think of God's own glorious Self! Think of Father, Son, and Spirit, and what the Triune Jehovah is in His own person and attributes, and if you do not praise Him, oh, how far must you have backslidden! Remember the host who now adore Him. When we bless Him, we stand not alone—angels and archangels are at our right hand, cherubim and seraphim are in the same choir. The notes of redeemed men go not up alone—they are united to, and swollen by, the unceasing flood of praise which flows from the hierarchy of angels. Think, beloved, of how you will soon praise Him! How, before many days and weeks are passed, many of us will be with the glorious throng! This last week, three of our number have been translated to the skies—more links to heaven, fewer bonds to earth. They have gone before us, we had almost said, "Would God it were our lot instead of theirs"; they have seen now what eye has not seen, and heard what ear has never heard, and their spirits have drunk in what they could not otherwise have conceived. We shall soon be there! Meanwhile, let each one of us sing—

"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise:

Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!
There you who love my Savior sit,
There I would gladly have a place
Among your thrones, or at your feet,
So I might see His face."

800 THE CENTURION'S FAITH AND HUMILITY – LUKE 7:6-8

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, March 15th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Then Jesus went with them. And when He was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it." — Luke 7:6-8

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Matthew 8]

THE GREATEST LIGHT may enter into the darkest places. We may find the choicest flowers blooming where we least expected them. Here was a Gentile, a Roman, a soldier—a soldier clothed with absolute power—and yet a tender master, a considerate citizen, a lover of God! Let no man, therefore, be despised because of his calling, and let not the proverb, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" be ever heard from the wise man's lips. The best of pearls have been found in the darkest caves of the ocean. Why should it not be so, still, that God should have even in Sardis a few who have not defiled their garments; who shall walk with Christ in white, for they are

worthy? Let no man think that because of his position in society he cannot excel in virtue. It is not the place which is to blame, but the man. If your heart is right, the situation may be difficult, but the difficulty is to be overcome; yes, and out of that difficulty shall arise an excellence which you had not otherwise known. Say not in your heart, "I am a soldier, and the barracks cannot minister to piety; therefore I may live as I wish because I cannot live as I should." Say not, "I am a working man in the midst of those who blaspheme, and therefore it would be vain for me to talk of holiness and piety." No, rather remember that in such a case it is your duty not only to talk of these precious things, but to wear them about you as your daily ornament. Where should the lamp be placed but in the room which otherwise were dark? Rest assured your calling and your position shall be no excuse for your sin if you continue in it, and neither shall your condition be any apology for the absence of integrity and virtue if these are not found in you.

Concerning the centurion, we may remark that perhaps we had never heard of him, though he loved his servant; perhaps we had never read his name, though he tenderly nursed his slave; perhaps he had found no place in the record of Inspiration, though he loved the Jewish nation, and built them a synagogue; nor had we read the story of his life, though he had become a proselyte to the Jewish faith—the one thing which gives him a place in these sacred pages is this, that he believed in the Messiah, that he was such a believer in the Son of God, that Jesus said concerning him, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." There is the vital point. There, my hearer is the notable matter which shall enroll you among the blessed. If you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, your name is in the Lamb's book of life, but if you believe not in

Him, your outward excellences, however admirable, shall avail you little.

The faith of the centurion is described both in the 8th chapter of Matthew, and in the chapter before us as being of the highest kind. But the remarkable point in it is that it was coupled with the very deepest humility. The same man who said, "Say the word, and my servant shall be healed," also said, "I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof." In bringing before you this noble soldier's example, these are two pivots upon which the discourse shall turn. I shall direct you to this double star shining with so mild a radiance in the sky of Scripture: *This man's deep humility was not injurious to the strength of his faith, and his gigantic faith was by no means hostile to his deep humiliation.*

I. To begin, then, **THE HUMILITY OF THE CENTURION WAS NOT AT ALL INJURIOUS TO THE STRENGTH OF HIS FAITH.**

Observe his humble expressions—he avowed that he was not worthy to come to Jesus. "I," said he, "did not even think myself worthy to come to You"; and then he further felt that he was not worthy that Jesus should come to him. "I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof." Was this self-abasement occasioned by the remembrance that he was a Gentile? That may have contributed to it. Was it because he was penitent on account of sundry rough and boisterous deeds which had stained his soldier life? It may be so. Was it not far rather because he had had a deep insight into his own heart, and had learned to see sin in its true colors; and therefore he who was worthy, according to the statement of the Jews, was most unworthy in his own apprehension?

You may have noticed in the biography of some eminent men how badly they speak of themselves. Southey, in his "life of Bunyan," seems at a difficulty to understand how Bunyan

could have used such depreciating language concerning his own character. For it is true, according to all we know of his biography, that he was not, except in the case of profane swearing, at all as bad as the most of the villagers. Indeed, there were some virtues in the man which were worthy of all commendation. Southey attributes it to a morbid state of mind, but we rather ascribe it to a return of spiritual health. Had the excellent poet seen himself in the same heavenly light as that in which Bunyan saw himself, he would have discovered that Bunyan did not exaggerate, but was simply stating, as far as he could, a truth which utterly surpassed his powers of utterance. The great light which shone around Saul of Tarsus was the outward type of that inner light above the brightness of the sun which flashes into a regenerate soul, and reveals the horrible character of the sin which dwells within. Believe me, when you hear Christians making abject confessions, it is not that they are worse than others, but that they see themselves in a clearer light than others; and this centurion's unworthiness was not because he had been more vicious than other men—on the contrary, he had evidently been much more virtuous than the common run of mankind—but it was because he saw what others did not see, and felt what others had not felt.

Deep as was this man's contrition, overwhelming as was his sense of utter worthlessness, he did not doubt for a moment either the power or the willingness of Christ. As for the question of willingness, it does not come under remark at all. The leper had said, "If You will," but the centurion was so clear about Christ's willingness to relieve suffering humanity, that it does not occur to him to mention it. He has long ago settled that matter, and now takes it for granted as a very axiom in the knowledge of Jesus, for such a one as He *must* be willing to do all the good which is asked of Him.

Nor is he at all dubious about our Lord's power. The palsy which afflicted the servant was a remarkably grievous one, but it did not at all stagger the centurion. He felt not only that Jesus could heal it, could heal it at once, could heal it completely, but that He could heal it without moving a step from the place where He stood. Let but the word be uttered, and in an instant his servant shall be healed. O glorious humiliation, how low you stoop! O noble faith, how high you soar! Brothers and sisters, if we can imitate this noble character in both respects, in the depth of his foundation, and in the height of his pinnacle, how near to the model of the temple of God shall we be built up! Empty indeed he was, having nothing of his own; not worthy to receive, much less indulging a thought of giving anything to Christ, and yet confident that all things are possible with the Master, and that He both can and will do according to our faith, and that in a manner gloriously unveiling His kingly power.

My dear friends, especially you who are under concern of soul, you feel unworthy—that is not a mistaken feeling, you are so; you are much distressed by reason of this unworthiness, but if you knew more of it, you might be more distressed still, for the apprehension which you already have of your sinfulness, although it is very painful, does not at all reach to the full extent of it: you are much more sinful than you think you are; you are much more unworthy than you yet know yourself to be. Instead of attempting a foolish and wicked soothing of your dark thoughts, and saying, "you have morbid ideas of yourself, you ought not so to speak," I rather pray you to believe that yours is an utterly hopeless case apart from Christ, that in your spiritual nature the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. I want you not to film the horrible ulcer of your depravity with specious hopes and professions. I desire you not to look upon this disease as though it were but skin deep; it lies in the source

and fountain of your life, and poisons your heart. The flames of hell must assuredly wrap themselves about you unless Christ interposes to save you. You have no merit of any kind or sort, nor will you ever have any; and more, you have no power to escape from your lost condition unaided by the Savior's hand. Without Christ you can do nothing, for you are abjectly poor, hopelessly bankrupt, and you cannot by the utmost diligence make yourself any other than you are. No words that I can utter can exaggerate your deplorable condition, and no feelings which you can ever experience can represent your real state in colors too alarming. You are not worthy that Christ should come to you; you are not worthy to draw *near* to Christ. But, and here is a glorious contrast, never let this for a single moment interfere with your full belief that He who is God, but who took our nature, that He who suffered in our stead upon the cross, that He who now rules in the highest heavens is able to do for you, and willing to do for you, exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think. Your inability does not prevent the working of His power; your unworthiness cannot put fetters to His bounty or limits to His grace. You may be an ill-deserving sinner, but that is no reason why He should not pardon you. You may be in your own apprehension, and truthfully so, the most unworthy that He ever stooped to bless, yet that is no reason why He should not condescend to press you to His bosom, to accept and to save you. I wish that as the first truth of God has impressed itself deeply upon you, the second truth may with equal force take up the possession of your heart, that Jesus Christ is "able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him," and He is as willing as He is able, and that your emptiness does not affect His fullness, your weakness does not alter His power, your inability does not diminish His omnipotence, your vileness does not restrain the

heart of His love which freely moves towards the very vilest of the vile.

By some means Satan almost always manages it this way, that when we get a little hope, it is generally a self-grounded hope, a vain idea that we are getting better in ourselves—a mischievous conceit: proud flesh which hinders the cure, and which the Surgeon must cut out; it is no sign of healing, it prevents healing. On the other hand, if we obtain a deep sense of sin, the evil one manages to put his hoof in there, and to insinuate that Jesus is not able to save such as we are. That is a great falsehood, for who shall say what the limit of Christ's power is? But if these two things could but meet together, a thorough sense of sin, and an immovable belief in the power of Christ to grapple with sin, and to overcome it, surely the kingdom of heaven would then have come near unto us in power and in truth; and then it would be again said, "I have not found such great faith, no, not in Israel."

Now, you troubled hearts, I have this word for you, and then I shall pass on to another point. Your sense of your unworthiness, if it is properly used, should drive you to Christ. You are unworthy, but Jesus died for the unworthy; Jesus did not die for those who profess to be by nature good and deserving, for the whole have no need of a physician. It is written, "In due time Christ died *for the ungodly."* "Who gave Himself for our"—what? "Excellence and virtues?" No—"who gave Himself for our *sins*, according to the Scriptures." We read that He "suffered, the just for the"—for the "just?" By no means, "the just for the *unjust*, to bring us to God." gospel pharmacy is for the sick; gospel bread is for the hungry; gospel fountains are open to the unclean; gospel water is given to the thirsty! You who need not shall not have; but you who need it may freely come. Let your huge and painful needs impel you to fly to Jesus. Let the vast cravings of your insatiable spirit

compel you to come to Him in whom all fullness dwells. Your unworthiness should act as a wing to bear you to Christ, the sinner's Savior. It should also have this effect upon you—it should prevent your raising those scruples, and making those demands which are such a hindrance to some persons finding peace. The proud spirit says, "I must have signs and wonders, or I will not believe; I must feel deep convictions, and horrible tremors, or I must quake because of dreams, or threatening texts applied to me with awful power." Ah, but, unworthy one, if you are truly humbled, you will not dare to ask for these; you will have done with demands and stipulations, and you will cry, "Lord, give me but a word! Speak but a word of promise, and it shall be enough for me. Do but say to me, 'Your sins are forgiven you.' Give me but half a text! Give me one kind assuring word to sink my fears against, and I will believe it, and rest upon it." Thus your sense of unworthiness should lead you to a simple faith in Jesus, and prevent your demanding those manifestations which the foolish so eagerly and impudently require. Beloved, it has come to this—you are so unworthy that you are shut out of every hope but Christ! All other doors are fast nailed against you; if there is anything to be done for salvation, you cannot do it; if there is any fitness needed, you have it not. Christ comes to you and tells you that there is no fitness needed for coming to Him, but that if you will but trust Him He will save you. I think I hear you say, "Then, my Lord, since it has come to this—

'I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die.'

And so, sink or swim, upon Your precious atonement, I cast my guilty soul, persuaded that You are able to save even such a one as I am; and I am so thoroughly persuaded of the goodness of Your heart, that I know You will not cast away a poor trembler who comes to You and takes You to be his only ground of trust."

II. I shall want you for a moment to be attentive while we shift the text to the other quarter. **THE CENTURION'S GREAT FAITH WAS NOT AT ALL HOSTILE TO HIS HUMILITY**.

His faith was extraordinary. It ought not to be extraordinary. We ought to all of us believe as well in Christ as this soldier did. Observe the form it took; he said to himself, "I am a subordinate officer, under authority. I am not the commander-in-chief, I am merely the commander of a troop of a hundred men, and yet over those hundred men I exert unlimited control. I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes. I say to the other, 'Come,' and he comes. And my servant, my poor sick servant (his tender heart comes back to him, and he puts him into the illustration), I say to him, 'Do this,' and he does it at once. I am simply a petty officer, under authority myself; but yet such is the influence of discipline that there are no questions raised, no deliberations tolerated; no soldier turns round and tells me that I have set him too difficult a task; no one, out of all the troops, ever dares to say to me, 'I shall not do it.'" The power of discipline among the legions of Rome was exceedingly great. The commander had but to say, "Do it," and it was done, though thousands bled and died. "Now," argued the centurion, "this glorious Man is the Son of God; He is not a subordinate; He is the commander-in-chief. If He gives the word, His will most surely must be done. Fevers and paralysis, good influences and bad, they must all be under His control, He can, therefore, heal my servant in a moment. Who can resist the great Caesar of heaven and earth?" That was, I believe, the

centurion's idea. Jesus has therefore but to will it, and to the utmost bounds of the earth those influences which are under His control will at once set to work to perform His Will. The centurion pictured himself as sitting down in the house and effecting his desires without rising, by merely issuing an order; and his faith placed the Lord Jesus in the same position. "You need not come to my dwelling; You can stand here, and if You will but say it, the cure will be worked at once." He did in his heart enthrone the Lord Jesus as a Captain over all the forces of the world, as the general issue of heaven and earth; as, in fact, the Caesar, the imperial Governor of all the forces of the universe. It was graciously thought, it was poetically embodied, it was nobly spoken, it was gloriously believed; but it was the truth and nothing more than the truth, for universal dominion is really in the power of Jesus today. If He were a true Caesar before He died, while He was despised and rejected of men, much more now that He has trod through the winepress, and stained His vesture with the blood of His vanquished enemies; much more now that He has led captivity captive, and sits enthroned by filial right at the right hand of God, even the Father; much more now that God has sworn that He will put all things under His feet, and that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things that are under the earth. Much more, I say, can He now work according to His good pleasure; He has today but to speak and it is done, to command, and it shall stand fast.

Beloved, see whether this truth of God bears us as on eagle's wings. Caesar has but to say, *"Absolve te,"* and his guilty subject is acquitted; Caesar has but to speak, and a province is conquered, an army routed. Stormy seas are navigated at Caesar's bidding, mountains are tunneled, the whole world shall be girded with military roads; Caesar is absolute and his will is law. So on earth, but so much more in heaven. Let the

imperial Caesar of heaven but say, "I forgive," and the devils of hell cannot accuse you. Let Him say, "I will help you," and who shall oppose? If Emmanuel is for you, who shall be against you? Let Him speak, and the bonds of sinful habit must fall off, and the darkness in which your soul has long been immersed must give place to the instantaneous light of God. He reigns as King, Lord over all; let His name be blessed forever; let each one of us, by our faith, give Him the honor that is due unto His name. All hail! Great Emperor, once slain, but now forever Lord of heaven and earth!

Here is one point to which I remind you; this man's faith did not for a moment interfere with his thorough personal humiliation. Interfere with it? My brothers and sisters, it was the source of it; it was the very foundation on which it rested. Don't you see, the higher his thoughts of Christ, the more unworthy he felt himself to be of the kind attentions of so good and great a personage? If he had thought less of Jesus, he would not have said, "I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof." There was, of course, a sight of himself to humble him, but the far more wondrous vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus was the true root and parent of his self-abasement. Because Christ was so great, he felt himself to be unworthy either to meet Him or entertain Him.

Observe, my brothers and sisters, his faith acted upon his humility by making him content with a word from Christ. His faith said, "A word is enough—it will work the cure." And then his humility said, "Ah, how unworthy I am even of so little a thing as a *word*. If a word will work a miracle, it is so great and powerful a thing that it is more than I deserve; therefore," he said, "I will not ask for more; I will not ask for footsteps when a sound will suffice; I will not clamor for His presence when His wish can restore my servant to health." His believing that a word was enough, made him humbly decline to pray for more,

so that his confidence in Christ instead of interfering with his sense of unworthiness, aided its manifestation. Brothers and sisters, never think for a moment, as many foolish persons do, that strong faith in the Lord is necessarily pride—it is the reverse. It is one of the worst forms of pride to question the promises of God. When a man says, "Christ has promised to save those who trust Him; I have trusted Him, therefore I am saved; I know I am; I am sure of it, because God says so, and I do not need any better evidence," that assurance is humility in action. But if a man says, "God has said that those who trust Him shall be saved; I do trust Him, but still I do not know that I am saved," why, you do as much as say you do not know whether God is a liar or not; and what more impertinent, what more proudly insulting thing than that? I know it is a most common thing to say, "It seems so presumptuous to say I know I am saved." I think it far more presumptuous to doubt, when God speaks positively, and to mistrust where the promise is plain. God says, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." If you believe and are baptized, if God is true, you shall be saved—you are saved. There is no hoping about it—it is so. Let God be true and every man a liar; and far off from these lips the insinuation of a doubt that perhaps God can be false to His promise and may break His word. If you question anything, question whether you trust Christ; but that settled, the question is ended. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you rest alone on Him, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. Take God at His word as your child takes you at your word. It is not too much for God to ask—you ask it of your child. Though you are a poor fallible creature, you would not have your child mistrust you. Shall you be believed, and not your God? Shall your little one be expected to confide in you, though you are evil, and will not you believe the voice of your heavenly parent to be the very truth of God, and rest upon it?

Ah, do so, I beseech you, and the more you do it, the more you will feel your unworthiness to do so. It astounds me to think that I shall be saved; it amazes me to think I shall be washed from my every sin in the precious blood of Christ, that I shall be set upon a rock, and a new song shall be put into my mouth. It astounds me, and as I think of it, I say, "How unworthy I am of such favors! I am less than the least of all the benefits which You have bestowed upon me." Your faith will not murder your humility, your humility will not stab at your faith; but the two will go hand in hand to heaven like a brave brother and a fair sister, the one bold as a lion, the other meek as a dove, the one rejoicing in Jesus, the other blushing at self. Blessed pair, gladly would I entertain you in my heart all the days of my pilgrimage on earth!

I have thus, as best I could, brought before you the example of the centurion with a few incidental lessons. Now for the **APPLICATION**, with as much earnestness and brevity as we can summon.

The application shall be to three sorts of people. First, we speak to *distressed minds* deeply conscious of their unworthiness. Jesus Christ is able and willing to save you this very morning. What is the form of your distress? Is it that your sins are great? Believe, I charge you, and may God the Holy Spirit help you, believe that Christ can pardon all your sins now. Do you see Him upon yonder cross? He is divine, but how He bleeds! He is divine, but how He groans! He smarts! He dies! Do you believe that any sin is too great for those sufferings to put away? Do you think the Son of God offered an inadequate atonement? An atonement of which you can say there is a limit to its efficacy beyond which it cannot operate for the salvation of believers, so that after all, sin is greater than the sacrifice, and the filth is more full of defilement than the blood is of purification? O crucify not Christ afresh by doubting the power

of the eternal God! My brothers and sisters, when in the stillness of the starry night we look up to the orbs of heaven, and remember the marvelous truths which astronomy has revealed to us of the magnificence, the inconceivable majesty of creation—if we then reflect that the infinite God who made all these became *man* for us, and that as man He was fastened to the transverse wood and bled to death for us; why, it will appear to us that if all the stars were crowded with inhabitants, and all those inhabitants had everyone been rebellious against God, and had steeped themselves up to the very throat in scarlet crimes, there must be efficacy enough in the blood of such a one as God Himself incarnate to take all their sins away! For this great miracle of miracles, God Himself paying honor to His own justice by suffering a substitutionary death, is an exhibition of infinite severity and love which far down eternity must appear so glorious as utterly to swallow up the remembrance of creature sin, and to put it altogether out of sight! Yes, sinner, believe that this moment the sins of 50 years can drop from off you, yes, of 70 or 80 years—that in an instant, you who are as black as hell can be pure as heaven if Jesus says the word. If you believe in Him it is done, for to trust Him is to be clean. Perhaps, however, your difficulty is to get rid of a hardness of heart. You feel that you cannot repent, but cannot Jesus make you repent by His Spirit? Do you hesitate about that question? See the world a few months ago hard bound with frost, but how daffodil and crocus, and snowdrop have come up above that once frozen soil, how snow and ice have gone, and the genial sun shines! God does it readily with the soft breath of the south wind, and the kind sunbeams and He can do the same in the spiritual world for you. Believe He can, and ask Him now to do it, and you shall find that the rock of ice shall thaw, that huge horrible devilish iceberg of a heart of yours shall begin to drip with showers of crystal penitence

which God shall accept through His dear Son. But, perhaps, it is some bad habit which gives you trouble. You have been long in it, and can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? You cannot get rid of it. I *know* you cannot. It is a desperate evil; it drags you downward like the hands of demons pulling you from the surface of life's stream down into its black and horrid depths of death and defilement. Ah, I know your dreads and despairs, but I ask you, cannot Jesus deliver? He has the key of your heart, and He can turn it so that all its wheels shall revolve otherwise than now. He who shakes the earth with earthquakes, who sweeps the seas with tornados, can send a heart-quake and a storm of strong repentance, and tear up your old habits by the roots. He whose every act is wonderful, can surely do what He will within the little world of your soul, since in the great world outside He rules as He pleases. Believe in His power, and ask Him to prove it. He has but to say, in a word, and this matter of present distress shall be taken away. Still I hear you say, "I cannot"; a horrible inability hangs over you. But it is not what *you* can do or cannot do—these have nothing to do with it, it is what *Jesus* can do. Can there be anything too hard for the Lord? Can the eternal Spirit ever be defeated when He wills to conquer in a man? Can He who "bears the earth's huge pillars up, and spreads the heavens abroad," who once was crucified, but who now ever lives, can He fail? Put your care into His hands, poor unable wretch, and ask Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself, and according to your faith so shall it be unto you.

A second application of our subject shall be made to the *patient workers* who are ready to faint. I know that in this house there are many who incessantly plead with God for their unconverted relatives and neighbors, that they may be saved. You have pleaded long for your husband, or your son, or your daughter, but they have gone yet further into sin. Instead of

answers to prayer, it seems as though heaven laughed at your importunity. Take heed of one thing; do not allow unbelief to make you think that the object of your care cannot be saved. While there is life there is hope. Yes, though they add drunkenness to lust and blasphemy to drunkenness, and hardness of heart and impenitence to blasphemy, Jesus has but to say the word, and they shall be turned, every one, from his evil way. Under the use of the means of divine grace it may be done, or even without the means it may be done. There have been men at work, or at their amusements, all in their wickedness, who have had impressions which have made them new men when it was least expected such a thing would occur; and those who have been the ringleaders in Satan's rebellious crew, have frequently become the boldest captains in the army of Christ. There is no room for doubt as to the possibility of the salvation of anybody when Jesus gives the word of command. You are unchristian when you shut out the harlot from hope, when you exclude the thief from repentance, or when you even despair of the murderer, for the big heart of God is greater than all your hearts put together, and the great thoughts of the loving Father are not as your thoughts when they climb the highest, neither are His ways your ways when they are at their utmost liberality. Oh, if your friend, your child, your wife, your husband, is a very devil incarnate, or if there are seven devils, or a legion of devils within him, while Christ lives, never mutter the word, "despair," for He can cast out the legion of evil spirits, and impart His Holy Spirit instead. Therefore have faith; you are unworthy to receive the blessing, but have faith in Him who is so able to bestow it. Many of you are going to your classes this afternoon; others of you will be engaged this evening in preaching the gospel, and you are getting very fainthearted because you do not see the success you so much desire. Well, perhaps it is good for you to feel how little you

can do apart from divine assistance. May this humiliation of soul continue, but do not let it degenerate into a distrust of *Him*. If Christ were dead and buried, and had never risen, it were a horrible case for us poor preachers, but while Christ lives endowed with the residue of the eternal Spirit which He freely gives, we ought not so much as fear, much less despair. May the church of God pluck up heart, and feel that with a living Christ in the midst of her armies, victory shall before long wait upon her banners.

The last application I shall make is the same as the second, only on a wider scale. There are many who are like *watchers* who have grown weary. We have heard that Christ comes—the great coming man—and the Lord knows right well that there is pressing need for someone to come, for this poor old machine of a world creaks dreadfully, and seems as though it were so laden with the sheaves of human sin that its axles would snap. God's infinite long-suffering has kept a crazy world from utter dissolution by a thousand helps and stays, but it is poor work, and seems to get worse and worse. Our state is rotten at the very core, both in business and politics. No man seems to succeed as well as he who has dispensed with his conscience, and laughs at principles. All things are come to that point that there is need for some deliverer to come, or else I do not know where we shall all go. And He will come, so the promise stands, and to those who wait for Him, His coming shall be as the beams of the day-star proclaiming the dawn. He is coming, and at His coming there shall be a glorious time, a millennium, a period of light, and truth, and joy, and holiness, and peace! We are watching and waiting for it. But we say, "Ah, it is hopeless to think of converting the world! How is the truth to be preached? Where are the tongues to speak it? How few proclaim it boldly! Where are the men to carry Christ's cross to the utmost bounds of the globe, and conquer nations for Him?"

Ah, say not in your heart, "the former days were better than now." Write not a book of lamentation and say, "The prophets, where are they? And the apostles have gone, and all the mighty confessors who lived and died for Christ have disappeared." At the lifting of His finger the Lord can raise up a thousand Jonahs for every city throughout the land, a thousand bold Isaiahs to declare His glory. He has but to bid it, and companies of apostles and armies of martyrs shall start up from the quiet nooks of old England's villages, or shall pour forth from the workshops of her cities. He can do wonders when He wills it. The worst plight of the church is but the time when her flood has ebbed in order that it may return in the fullness of its strength. Have confidence; for even should the instruments fail, and the ministries become a dead and *effete* thing, yet His coming shall accomplish His purposes, and when He appears, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Jesus is not under authority, but He has soldiers under Him, and He has but to say to this spirit or to that, "Go," or "Come," and His will shall be done. He has but to quicken His church by His Holy Spirit, and say, "Do this," and the impossible task shall be accomplished. What seems beyond all human skill or mortal hope shall be worked, and worked at once. When He says, "Do," it shall be done, and His name shall be praised! O for more faith and more self-abasement—twin angels to abide in this assembly evermore. Go forth with us to battle, and return with us from the victory! O Lord, the lover of humility, and the author of faith, give us to be steeped in both for Jesus' sake. Amen.

801 THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER – LUKE 7:37-38

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, March 22nd, 1868, by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And, behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." — Luke 7:37-38

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Psalm 116; Luke 7:36-50]

THIS IS THE WOMAN who has been confused with Mary Magdalene. How the error originated, it would not be easy to imagine, but error it certainly is. There is not the slightest shadow of evidence that this woman, who was a sinner, had even the remotest connection with her out of whom Jesus cast seven devils. In delivering you a sermon a few Sabbaths ago, upon the life of Mary of Magdala [Sermon #792, *Mary Magdalene*], I think I showed you that it was hardly possible, and most improbable, that she could have been a sinner in the sense here intended. And now I venture to affirm that there is as much evidence to prove that the woman in the narrative now before us, was the Queen of Sheba, or the mother of Sisera, as that she was Mary Magdalene—there is not a figment or

fraction of evidence to be found. The fact is, there is no connection between the two!

Further, the sinner before us is not Mary of Bethany, with whom so many have identified her. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, did anoint our Savior, but this is a previous anointing, by quite a different person, and the two narratives are altogether distinct. There is a great likeness, certainly, between the two. The principal persons were both women, full of ardent love to Christ; they both anointed the Lord with ointment; the name of Simon is connected with both, and they both wiped the Savior's feet with their hair, but it ought not to astonish you that there were *two* persons whose intense affection thus displayed itself—the astonishment should rather be that there were not *200* who did so, for the anointing of the feet of an honored friend was by no means so uncommon a token of respect among the Orientals as to be an unprecedented marvel! Loved as Jesus deserved to be, the marvel is that He was not more often visited with these generous tokens of human love. It is a pity to fuse two occasions into one, as though we grudged a double unction to the Anointed of the Lord. That both events should happen in the houses of persons named Simon is not at all remarkable—remember that the one was Simon the Pharisee, and the other Simon the leper; and that Simon is one of the most common of Jewish names. In our day a thing having happened in the house of a "John," and another thing like it in the house of another "John," would not be remarkable, since Johns are exceedingly common among us, as were Simons in the days of our Lord. But that the two, or perhaps I should say three, anointings (for I am inclined to think there were three) are not the same is evident from the following reasons: they differ in time; our Lord lived at least six months after His anointing by this woman, and if you follow the narrative, you read in the

very next chapter, "And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him." But when Mary anointed Him at Bethany, He said, "She did it for My burial," and our Lord was then within a very few days of His crucifixion. The anointing by Mary, the sister of Lazarus, took place at Bethany (Matthew 26:6), but this occurred in Galilee, which is quite another quarter. Moreover, the fact itself was really a very different one, for although both women anoint Christ with ointment, yet there was a peculiar preciousness and power of perfume about the spikenard of the wealthier Mary which is not mentioned in the ointment of this woman of a lower position in life.

Mary, according to John (John 12:3), poured out a whole pound of the costly nard, but such is not said of the humble offering of the woman who was a sinner. Matthew tells us that a woman poured the ointment on His head, but this poor penitent is only said to have anointed His feet; tears are not mentioned in connection with Mary by Matthew, Mark, or John, while they make a conspicuous feature in the love of the gracious mourner now before us. After the transaction there was an objection raised in both cases, but mark the great difference! In this case, Simon the Pharisee objected because she, being a sinner, was allowed to have such familiarity with the Lord; in the other case no such objection was raised to the person, but Judas Iscariot objected to her having been so profuse and extravagant in the abundance and costliness of the anointing, and murmured, saying that this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. If you confuse these two occurrences, you not only make a flagrant mistake, but you lose a precious lesson. This case now before us is the offering of a poor returning wanderer, who, under a deep sense of gratitude, brings the best she has to her Lord, and is accepted

by His divine grace. In the case of Mary of Bethany, it was an advanced saint, one who had sat at Jesus' feet, and heard of Him, and had before chosen the good part which should not be taken away from her, and she brings a costly tribute as the offering of her deep, sincere affection, which had grown and deepened by the receipt of many favors from His loving hand.

The advanced believer is bolder than the new convert. She anoints His head when the other only anoints His feet, but she is not less loving, for if there are fewer tears, there is a more costly spikenard. Jesus defended the penitent, and bade her go in peace; but in Mary's case there was no need to say, "Your sins are forgiven," for she already possessed that priceless gift; our Lord, instead of merely defending, warmly eulogized her love, and declared, "Wherever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her." Thus much will suffice to show you that "the woman who was a sinner" is neither to be confused with Mary of Magdala on the one hand, or Mary of Bethany on the other. Let us learn to read our Bibles with our eyes open, to study them as men do the works of great artists, studying each figure, and even each sweet variety of light and shade.

Too long have we been controverting on the threshold of the text; let us now lift the latch. Lo, on the table I see two savory dishes, let us feed thereon. Here are two silver bells, let us ring them; their notes are heavenly—O for ears to hear their rich, clear melody! The first note is *Grace,* and the second tone is *Love*.

I. GRACE, the most costly of spikenard: this story literally drips with it, like those Oriental trees which bleed perfume, or as the spouse when she rose up to open to her beloved, and her hands dropped with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. Grace, that gentle

dew of heaven, is here plenteously distilled, and falls like small rain upon the tender herb. Grace, sovereign, distinguishing, omnipotent, is exceedingly magnified in this narrative. Lo, I see it exalted upon a glorious high throne, with the king's daughter waiting as an honorable woman among its courtiers.

1. First, grace is here glorified *in its object.* She was *"a sinner"*—a sinner not in the flippant, unmeaning, everyday sense of the term, but a sinner in the blacker, filthier, and more obnoxious sense. She had forsaken the guide of her youth, and forgotten the covenant of her God; she had sinned against the laws of purity, and had made herself as a defiled thing; she had fallen into that deep ditch concerning which it is written, "The abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein." According to our Lord's parable, she was in comparison with the Pharisee as a 500-pence sinner, while the Pharisee was but as fifty. She was one of the scarlet sinners that we read of in Scripture—she sinned and made others to sin. Hers were offenses which provoke the Lord to jealousy, and stir up His wrath. Yet, oh, miracle of miracles, she was an object of distinguishing grace, ordained unto eternal life! Why was this? On what legal grounds was she selected? For what merit was she chosen? Was this an extraordinary and out-of-the-way instance? By no means, dear friends, for the grace of God has frequently chosen the lowest of the low, and the vilest of the vile. Recollect how, in the pedigree of our Lord, you find the name of the shameless Tamar, the harlot Rahab, and the unfaithful Bathsheba, as if to indicate that the Savior of sinners would enter into near relationship with the most degraded and fallen of our race. This is, in fact, one of the dearest titles of our Lord, though it was hissed at Him from the lips of contempt, "A friend of publicans and sinners." This is Jesus' character of which He is not ashamed: "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Free grace has made no distinction among men on account of merit,

whether false or real, if real there is. The law has concluded us all in unbelief, and then the abounding grace of God, looking upon us all as equally cast away and ruined both by Adam's fall and by our own personal transgression, has predestinated and called whomever it would. Do you not hear from the throne of mercy the echoes of that sovereign proclamation, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"? Grace has pitched upon the most unlikely cases in order to show itself to be grace; it has found a dwelling place for itself in the most unworthy heart, that its freeness might be the better seen. Do I address one who has greatly fallen? Let this thought comfort you, if your heart bewails your sin—let this give you hope of mercy, that in the election of grace some of the grossest blasphemers, persecutors, thieves, fornicators, and drunkards have been included, and in consequence thereof they have been forgiven, renewed, and made to live sober, righteous, and godly lives. Such as these have obtained mercy so that in them, first, God might show forth all long-suffering as a comfort and encouragement to others to cry unto the Lord for His mercy.

Grace reigns right majestically in the case before us, in that *this particular sinner* should be chosen; to choose a sinner was something, but to choose this one individual was even more astonishing. No doubt, she did in spirit ask herself, "Why me, Lord? Why me?" Had she been here this morning, she would sing as heartily as any of us—

"Oh, gift of gifts! Oh, grace of faith!
My God, how can it be
That You, who has discerning love,
Should give that gift to me?
How many hearts You might have had
More innocent than mine!

How many souls more worthy far
Of that pure touch of Thine!
Ah, Grace! Into unlikeliest hearts
It is Your boast to come;
The glory of Your light to find
In darkest spots a home."

At yonder table sits Simon the Pharisee, a good respectable man as he thinks himself to be, and yet no divine choice has fallen upon him—while this poor harlot is elected by distinguishing grace! How can we account for this? Many there were in the city like she, some worse, some better; but grace had marked *her* as its own. Oh, strange, yet admirable sovereignty! Now, it is possible that you may not be much taken with the glory of grace in selecting her, but I will ask you whether you are not delighted with the grace which separated *you* to be the Lord's? O brothers and sisters, when once a man discovers that God has chosen him, when he feels that grace has broken his heart, has brought him to Christ, and has covered him with a perfect righteousness, then he breaks out in wondering exclamations, "How could You have chosen me? What am I, and what is my father's house, that I should be taken into such royal favor?" The more a believer looks within, the more he discovers reasons for divine *wrath,* and the less he believes in his own personal merit. How is the heart of a true believer filled with adoring gratitude that ever the Lord's boundless love should have been pleased to settle and fix itself upon him! This is not so much for me to preach upon as it is for your private meditations. I earnestly commend to you that precious thought, that Jehovah loved you from before the foundations of the world, and chose you when He might have left you—chose you when He passed over thousands of the great and the noble, the wise, and the learned. The doctrine is

not a dogma to be fought over, as dogs over a bone, but to be rejoiced in, and turned to practical account as an incentive to reverent wonder and affectionate gratitude. Where sin abounded grace did much more abound, and the "woman who was a sinner," is now before us a weeping penitent; the sinner "of the city," a public sinner, is now openly a follower of the Holy One.

2. Grace is greatly magnified in *its fruits*. Who would have thought that a woman who had yielded her members to be servants of unrighteousness, to her shame and confusion, should have now become, what if I call her a maid of honor to the King of kings?—one of Christ's most favored servitors? She offered hospitalities to Jesus which the Pharisee omitted, and offered them in an infinitely better spirit and style than the Pharisee could have done if he had tried! Let us remark that the grace of God brought this woman in a way of providence to listen to the Savior's discourses. In a former part of this chapter it appears He had been preaching the gospel, and more especially preaching it to the poor. Perhaps she stood in the street attracted by the crowd, and, as she listened to our Savior's talk, it seemed to hold her fast; she had never heard a man speak after that fashion, and when He spoke of abounding mercy, and the willingness of God to accept as many as would come to Him, then the tears began to follow each other down her cheeks; and when she listened again to that meek and lowly preacher, and heard Him tell of the Father in heaven who would receive prodigals and press them to His loving bosom, then her heart was fairly broken, she relinquished her evil traffic, she became a new woman, desirous of better things, anxious to be freed from sin. But she was greatly agitated in her heart with the question, *could* she, *would* she be really forgiven? Would such pardoning love as she had heard of reach even to her? She hoped so, and was in a measure comforted. Her faith grew, and

with it an ardent love. The Spirit of God still worked with her till she enjoyed a feeble hope, a gleam of confidence; she believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, that He had appeared on earth to forgive sins, and she rested on Him for the forgiveness of her sins, and longed for an opportunity to do Him homage, and if possible to win a word direct from His mouth. The Lord of mercy came to the city where she lived. "Now," she thought, "here is my opportunity; that blessed prophet has come; the man who spoke as never man spoke is near me, and I have already derived such benefit from Him that I love Him better than all besides; I love Him as my own soul. I will steal into the house of the Pharisee, that I may feast my eyes with the sight of Him." Now, when she came to the door, the Savior was reclining at the table, according to the Oriental custom, and His feet were towards the door; for the Pharisee had but little respect for Christ, and had not given Him the best and innermost place at the feast; and there He lay with His uncovered feet towards the door, and the woman, almost unperceived, came close to Him, and, as she looked and saw that the Pharisee had refused Him the ordinary courtesy of washing His feet, and that they were all stained and travel-worn with His long journeys of love, she began to weep, and the tears fell in such plenteous showers, that they even washed His feet. Here was holy water of a true sort. The crystal of penitence falling in drops each one as precious as a diamond. Never were feet bedewed with more precious water than those penitent eyes showered forth. Then, unbinding those luxurious tresses which had been for her the devil's nets in which to entangle souls, she wiped the sacred feet with them. Surely she thought that her chief adornment, the crown and glory of her womanhood, was all too worthless a thing to do service to the lowest and meanest part of the Son of God. That which once was her vanity now was humbled and yet exalted to the lowest

office; she made her eyes a pitcher and her locks a towel. "Never," says Bishop Hall, "was any hair so preferred as this; how I envy those locks that were graced with the touch of those sacred feet."

There a sweet temptation overtook her, "I will even kiss those feet, I will humbly pay reverence to those blessed limbs." She spoke not a word, but how eloquent were her actions! Better, even, than Psalms and hymns were these acts of devotion. Then she thought of that alabaster box containing perfumed oil with which, like most Eastern women, she was likely to anoint herself for the pleasure of the smell, and for the increase of her beauty, and now, opening it, she pours out the costliest thing she has upon His blessed feet. Not a word, I say, came from her, and, brothers and sisters we would prefer a single speechless lover of Jesus who acted as she did, to 10,000 noisy talkers who have no gifts, no heart, no tears. As for the Master, He remained quietly acquiescent, saying nothing, but all the while drinking in her love, and letting His poor weary heart find sweet solace in the gratitude of one who once *was* a sinner, but who was to be such no more.

Grace, my brothers and sisters, deserves our praise, since it does so much for its object. Grace does not choose a man and leave him as he is. My brothers and sisters, men rail at grace sometimes as though it were opposed to morality—whereas it is the great source and cause of all complete morality—indeed, there is no real holiness in the sight of God except that which grace creates, and which grace sustains. This woman, apart from grace, would had remained black and defiled still to her dying day, but the grace of God worked a wondrous transformation, removing the impudence of her face, the flattery from her lips, the finery from her dress, and the lust from her heart. Eyes which were full of adultery were now founts of repentance; her lips which were doors of lascivious

speech, now yielded holy kisses—the profligate was a penitent, the castaway a new creature. All the actions which are attributed to this woman illustrate the transforming power of divine grace. She exhibited the deepest repentance. She wept abundantly. She wept out of no mere sentimentalism, but at the remembrance of her many crimes. She wept for sorrow and for shame as she thought over her early childhood, and how she had slighted a mother's training, how she had listened to the tempter's voice, and hurried on from bad to worse. Every part of her life story would rise before her as a painfully vivid dream. The sight of those blessed feet helped her to remember the dangerous paths into which she had wandered; the sluices of grief were drawn up, and her soul flowed out in tears. O blessed Spirit of grace we adore You as we see the rock smitten and the waters gushing. "He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow."

Note the woman's humility. She had once possessed a brazen face, and knew no bashfulness, but now she stands behind the Savior. She did not push herself in before His face; she was content to have the meanest place. If she might not venture to anoint His head, yet, if she might do service to His feet, she blushed as she accepted the honor. Those who truly serve the Lord Jesus, have a holy bashfulness, a shrinking sense of their own unworthiness, and are content to fulfill the very lowest office in His household. That is no service for Christ when you would need ride the king's horse, and wear the king's garment, and have it said, "This is the man whom the king delights to honor." That is serving yourself rather than Christ, when you covet the chief place in the synagogue, and would have men call you Rabbi. But that is real service when you can care for the poor; when you can condescend to men of low estate, and become a teacher of the ignorant and an instructor of babes. He serves well who works behind his master's back,

unknown and unperceived—toiling in the dark, unreported, unapplauded, and happy to have it so. See, beloved, how in a woman who was once so shameless, grace plants and makes to flourish the fair and modest flower of true humility.

Yet was the woman *courageous*, for she must have needed much courage to enter into a Pharisee's house. The look of a Pharisee to this woman must have been enough to freeze summer into howling winter; those Pharisees had an insufferable contempt of everybody who was not of their own clique, who did not fast twice a week, and tithe their mint, anise, and cumin; they said, by every gesture, "Stand by, I am holier than you." To a person of infamous character, the pompous Pharisee would be doubly contemptuous, and a *woman* conscious of unworthiness would be sorely wounded by his manners; besides, at a feast, her tears would be much out of place, and therefore she would be the more rudely rebuked; but how fearless she was, and how bravely she held her tongue when Simon railed! What will not men and women do when divine grace moves them to love, and love prompts them to courage? Yes, into the very jaws of hell the grace of God would make a believer dare to enter if God commanded him. There is no mountain too high for a believing foot to scale, and no furnace too hot for a believing heart to bear. Let Rome and its amphitheatres, Piedmont and its snow, France and its galleys, Smithfield and its stakes, the Netherlands and their rivers of blood, all speak of what divine grace can do when once it reigns in the heart—what heroes it can make of the very weakest and most timid of God's children, where it rules supreme.

I have said that in every part of this woman's action grace is honored, and it is so more especially in this respect, that what she did was *practical*. Hers was not pretense, but real and expensive service. The religion of some professors stops short at their substance; it costs them nothing, and, I fear, is worth

nothing. They appear before the Lord empty. They buy no sweet cane with money; neither does the Lord receive the fat of their sacrifices. I must confess myself utterly at a loss to understand the piety of some people. I thank God I am not bound to understand it, and that I am not sent into the world to be a judge of my fellow creatures—but I do greatly wonder at the religion of many. There are to be found, and I have found them, persons whose love to Christ is of such a sort that they give to His cause the larger proportion of their substance, and do so gladly, thinking it a privilege; yes, I know some who pinch themselves—some of the poor and needy, who stint themselves that they may give to Christ. Such are doubtless blessed in the deed. I do not understand those men who have thousands upon thousands of pounds, perhaps hundreds of thousands, and profess to love Christ, but dole out their gifts to Jesus in miserable fragments. I must leave them to their Master, to be judged at the last, but I confess I do not understand them or admire them. If I did love Christ at all, I would love Him so that I would give Him all I could, and if I did not do that, I think I would say, "He is not worth it, and I will not be a sham professor." It is rank hypocrisy to profess love and then to act a miserly part. Let those who are guilty of it settle the account between God and their own souls. This woman's alabaster box was given freely, and if she had had more to give, she would have given it after the spirit of that other woman, that memorable widow, who had two mites which made a farthing—which were all her living—but she gave it all out of love to God. Grace reigns indeed with high control when it leads men who naturally would be selfish to practice generosity in the cause of the Redeemer. Let these gleanings suffice, the vintage of the fruits of grace is too great for us to gather it all this morning.

3. I would have you remember, in the third place, that grace is seen by attentive eyes in our *Lord's acceptance* of what this chosen vessel had to bring. Jesus knew her sin. The Pharisee wondered that Jesus did not shrink from contact with her. You and I may wonder, too. We sometimes feel it a task to have to commune with persons of a certain character even when they profess to repent: our Lord's sensitiveness of the guilt of sin was much keener than ours, yet He rested still upon the couch, and quietly accepted what she brought, permitted her the fond familiarity of kissing His feet again and again, and to wet them with her tears—permitted all that, I say, and accepted all that, and herein made His grace to shine most brightly. Oh, that Jesus should ever accept anything of me, that He should be willing to accept my tears, willing to receive my prayers and my praises! We cheerfully accept a little flower from a child, but then the flower is beautiful, and we are not far above the child; but Jesus accepts from us that which is in its nature impure, and upbraids us not. O grace, how condescending you are; see, believer, Jesus has heard your prayers and answered them; He has blessed your labors, given you souls as your reward, and at this moment that which is in your heart to do for Him He receives, and He raises no objection, but takes what you bring to Him, takes it with joy. O grace, you are grace indeed, when the offerings of unworthy ones become dear unto Jesus' heart.

4. Further, divine grace is displayed in this narrative when you see *our Lord Jesus Christ become the defender of the penitent.* Everywhere grace is the object of human mockery; men snap at it like evening wolves; some attack it at the fountain head—they cannot endure the doctrine of election. Some professors almost foam at the mouth at the very mention of the word "predestination"; they cannot bear it, and yet it is God's truth, let them say what they will, and there shall it stand; let them kick against the pricks if they dare. "It is not of him who wills,

nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." Would to God men would give up their rebellious questions, and bow before the King of kings! On this occasion, Simon quibbled at grace in that a sinful woman should be allowed to approach the Lord; he would have put her in quarantine at the least, if not in prison. Some object to grace in its perpetuity— they struggle against persevering grace, but others, like this Simon, struggle against the bounty of grace. How could such a woman as she was be permitted to draw so near to Christ? Certain captious spirits will demand, "How should Jesus give to such unworthy ones such acceptance, such manifestations of Himself, such privileges?" Our Lord took upon Himself to defend her, and therefore she might well afford to hold her tongue. So shall it be with you; if Satan accuses you, and your enemies, with loudmouthed accusations cry out against you, you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who will certainly plead your cause and clear you! Jesus, by His defensive parable shows that He was justified in letting the woman approach, because great love prompted her; there was no sin in her approach, but much to commend, since her motive was excellent, and the motive is the true measure of a deed. She felt intense love and gratitude towards the person who had forgiven her. Therefore her acts were not to be forbidden, but commended. He justifies her and incidentally justifies Himself. Had He not done well in having won a sinner's heart to penitence and love? Was not election justified in having chosen one to such holy devotedness and fervency? At the last great day the Lord will justify His grace before the eyes of the whole universe, for He will allow the grace-worked virtues of His chosen ones to be unveiled, and all eyes shall see that grace reigns through righteousness! Then shall they forever be silenced who accused the grace of God of leading to licentiousness, for they shall see that in every case free

forgiveness led to gratitude, and gratitude to holiness. The chosen shall be made choice men. Grace chose them notwithstanding all their deformities; and when it has cast about them a supernal beauty, they shall be the wonder and admiration of the universe, evidently made to be the noblest and best of mankind. Show me where divine grace ever created sin! You cannot, but lo, in what a manner has grace created holiness! It is not ashamed to let its chosen sheep appear before the great dividing Shepherd's throne, for of them all it shall be said, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink." Grace does not smuggle men into heaven, but brings them up to heaven's requirements through the Spirit and the blood!

5. Once more, my beloved, the grace of God is seen in this narrative in *the bestowal of yet richer favors.* Great grace saved her, rich grace encouraged her, and unbounded grace gave her a divine assurance of forgiveness. It was proved that she was forgiven, for she loved much, but she had never received the full assurance of it. She was a hopeful penitent rather than a confirmed believer. But the Master said, "Your sins are forgiven you"; from that moment full assurance of faith must have occupied her soul. And then He gave her that choice benediction, "Go in peace," by which the peace of God which passes all understanding henceforth kept her mind, so that even when she had to go out of this world into the unknown realm, she heard in the midst of Jordan's billows, the divine sentence—"Go in peace." Ah, beloved, you know not what grace can do for you! God is not stinted in His grace. If He has lifted you up out of the miry clay, He can do more; He can set your feet upon a rock! If on the rock you already stand, He can do more, He can put a new song into your mouth! And if

already you lift the joyous hymn, He can do more yet; He can establish your goings! You do not yet know the exceeding bounty of your own heavenly Father. Unfathomable is His goodness. Arise and enjoy it. Behold the whole land is before you, from Dan to Beersheba—all the provisions of the covenant of grace belong to you. Have but faith, and you shall yet comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Here, then, was grace in its object, grace in its fruit, grace in the acceptance of that fruit, grace in the defense which Jesus made of the gracious one, and grace in the blessings bestowed upon her. May grace deal thus bountifully with us.

II. We have but two or three moments left for what requires far more space, namely, **LOVE**. The word blossoms with roses, and suggests the voice of the turtledoves, and the singing of birds. Our time, however, binds us to a narrow path which we must not leave, although the beds of lilies on either hand invite us.

Love—its source—it bubbles up as a pure rill from the wellhead of divine grace. She loved much, but it was because much had been forgiven. There is no such thing as mere natural love to God. The only true love which can burn in the human breast towards the Lord is that which the Holy Spirit, Himself, kindles. If you truly love the God who made you, and redeemed you, you may be well assured that you are His child, for none but His children have any love to Him.

Its *secondary cause* is faith. The 50th verse tells us, "Your faith has saved you." Our souls do not begin with loving Christ, but the first lesson is to trust Him. Many penitents attempt this difficult task; they aspire to reach the top of the stairs without treading the steps; they want to be at the pinnacle of the temple before they have crossed the threshold. First, trust Christ for the pardon of your sin—when you have done this, your sins

are forgiven, and *then* love shall flash to your heart as the result of gratitude for what the Redeemer has done for you. Grace is the *source* of love, but *faith* is the agent by which love is brought to us.

The food of love is a sense of sin, and a grateful sense of forgiveness. If you and I felt more deeply the guilt of our past lives, we would love Jesus Christ better. If we have but a clearer sense that our sins deserve the deepest hell, that Christ suffered what *we* ought to have suffered in order to redeem us from our iniquities, we should not be such cold-hearted creatures as we are. We are perfectly monstrous in our lack of love to Christ, but the true secret of it is a forgetfulness of our ruined, and lost natural estate, and a forgetfulness of the sufferings by which we have been redeemed from that condition. O that our love might feed itself this day, and find a renewal of its strength in remembering what sovereign grace has done.

Love in the narrative before us shines in the fact that the service the woman rendered to our Lord was perfectly voluntary. No one suggested it, much less pressed it upon her. It takes the gloss off our service when we need to be dragged to it, or pushed forward by some energetic pleader. Brothers and sisters, the anointing was impromptu with her. Christ was there, and it was at her suggestion that she anointed His feet. Mary of Bethany had not then set the example; the woman who was a sinner was an original in her service. In these days we have many inventors and discoverers for our temporal use and service, why should we not have inventors for Jesus who will bring out new projects of usefulness? We are most of us content to travel in the old rut, but if we had more love to Jesus we would be more eccentric, and should have a degree of freshness about our service which at present is all too rare. Lord, give us the love which can lead the way!

Her service to Jesus was *personal*. She did it all herself, and all *to Him*. Do you notice how many times the pronoun occurs in our text? "She stood at *His* feet behind *Him* weeping, and began to wash *His* feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed *His* feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment." She served Christ *Himself*. It was neither service to Peter, nor James, nor John, nor yet to the poor or sick of the city, but to the Master Himself; and, depend upon it, when our love is in active exercise, our piety will be immediately towards Christ—we shall sing to Him, pray to Him, teach for Him, preach for Him, live to HIM! Forgetfulness of the personality of Christ takes away the very vitality of our religion. How much better will you teach, this afternoon, in your Sunday school class, if you teach your children for Christ! How much better will you go forth this evening to tell others the way of salvation, if you go to do it for His sake! Then you court no man's smile—you fear no man's frown. It is enough for you that you have done it for the Master, and if the Master accepts it, you have the reward in that very fact!

The woman's service showed her love in that it was *fervent*. There was so much affection in it— nothing conventional; no following chilly propriety, no hesitating inquiry for precedents. Why did she kiss His feet? Was it not a superfluity? What was the good of it? Did it not look sentimental, affected, sensuous, and indelicate? Little did she care how it looked; she knew what she meant. She could not do otherwise. Her whole soul went out in love, she acted naturally as her heart dictated, and, brothers and sisters, she acted well. O for more of this guileless piety which hurls decorum and regulation to the winds. Ah, throw your souls into the service of Christ; let your heart burn in His presence, and let all your soul belong to Jesus. Serve not your Master as though you were half asleep; do not work with drooping hands and half-closed eyes, but wake up the whole of

your powers and passions—for such love as *He* has shown you, give the most awakened and quickened love in return. O for more of this love! If I might only pray one prayer this morning, I think it should be that the flaming torch of the love of Jesus should be brought into every one of our hearts, and that all our passions should be set ablaze with love to Him.

One thought more, and I am done. This woman's love is a lesson to us in *the opportunity* which she seized. She was evidently but just pardoned; she was rather a weeper than one who had learned to rejoice, and yet for all that, she would serve Him at the first dawn of her spiritual life. Now, you young converts, no longer say, "We will do something for Christ in a few years' time when we have made our calling and election sure; we will wait till we have grown in grace, and then try to do what we can." No, no! As soon as you are washed, bring your offering to Jesus; the very day of your conversion, enlist in His army, for speedy obedience is beautiful. Perhaps if this woman had lingered, she had never anointed the Lord at all—but in the hot flush of her first love, she did well to perform at once this zealous, fervent act. Young converts maintain, by God's grace, the warmth of the blood which circulates in the church's veins. Old churches generally become diseased churches when they cease to grow. I do not know a church in all England without conversions which is at all in a happy spiritual state. The fact is, the fresh comers stir us all up by their fervor, their simplicity, their childlike confidence. Now, beloved ones, we encourage you to show this. For our sakes, for your own sakes, for Christ's sake, do not hesitate—if there is anything you can do, though you are uneducated in the divine school, do it. Though there may be a dozen blunders in the method, yet do it, for Christ will accept it! The Pharisee may quibble—well, perhaps it may keep his tongue from other mischief—let him, you can bear it, Christ *will* defend you, Jesus will accept you; and as a reward

for doing what you can, He may be pleased to give you divine grace to do more, and may breathe over you a full assurance of faith, which had you been idle, you might not for years have attained; and He may give you a peace of conscience in serving Him which, had you sat still, might never have come to you at all. I beseech all of you who love Jesus, do not hide the light you have under a bushel, but come out and show it! If you have but a little faith, use it; if you have only a *grain* of faith, turn it to account. Put the one talent out at interest, and use it for the Master at once, and the Lord bless you in such a work by increasing your faith and love, and making you to be as this woman was—a highly favored servant of this blessed Master. May the Lord give every one of you His blessing, for Jesus' sake.

802 GOOD EARNESTS OF GREAT SUCCESS – ACTS 6:7

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Evening, January 12th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." — Acts 6:7

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Acts 6 and 7:54-60]

CERTAIN THINGS preceded this prosperity—the counterpart of which I verily believe we have experienced among ourselves. There had been a little trouble in the church; some had thought one thing, some had thought another. There appeared to have been a just cause for complaint. The apostles, conciliatory in their temper, and earnest in their endeavor to keep the church together, as all true ministers should be, proposed the election of seven men who would distribute the contributions impartially among the poor. This was agreed to and acted upon by the entire assembly, and straightaway the multitude of them that believed were *of one heart and of one soul.* Well might great grace rest upon them all, for *they loved each other fervently with a pure heart.* Such unanimity, as a rule, I consider essential to church prosperity. If there are divisions among you, and one shall say, "I am for this," and another, "I am for that";

how can you expect that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of peace, to be present with you, and working among you? But when we are knit together in brotherly affection, the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore. Where brotherly love continues, and saints walk in holy unity, the witness they bear is powerful, and the increase they gather is palpable.

So I felt when I met with the brothers and sisters last Thursday night. The attendance at the church meeting was very numerous, and the unanimity that prevailed not only gratified me, but I must confess astounded me too. I think all of us who know anything of the history of churches, especially those of a democratic order where we recognize the rights of every member, understand how easy it is for thoughts to diverge, for counsels to vary, and for excellent brethren to conscientiously disagree. A breach once made has a tendency to widen, and a cut, unless speedily repaired, may tear a church to pieces. But not so much as a single word was spoken, nor do I know that so much as a single thought crossed the breast of anyone that evening contrary to the general current of unanimous opinion with which you elected my brother to take upon himself the office proposed to assist me in my work. I felt as if I could only weep my joy. I knew of no words by which I could express it, because I looked not only at the unity itself, but regarding it as one of the qualifications for future prosperity, I thought within myself, "Surely God will bless us; surely He will bless us yet more abundantly than before."

Moreover, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you know that some two or three years ago, Baptist churches of London scarcely knew each other; there might have been some secret love between them, but certainly there was no manifest display of it. But now for two years we have been associated together to the number of 80 or ninety; in fact, there are now

nearly a hundred of the churches among whom union has been cemented. We have been enabled to do some service for the Master by this incorporation, but whatever service we may have done, or may not have done, this certainly has been the result of our meeting with each other—that the churches have come to feel themselves to be a whole, they keep rank, they walk together as a phalanx, they desire to be faithful to Christ, and to bear each others' burdens. If anyone had told me, three or four years ago, that I should live to see, as I did last year, this house filled with the representatives of our Baptist churches met together to pray, I would have said, "If the Lord will open windows in heaven, may such a thing be?" But it has been, and by God's grace it will be yet again, and we shall clasp hands next Tuesday and go on for another campaign against the common enemy, united as one man, first to Christ, and then to one another. May we not look upon this as a sign that God is intending to bless *all* our churches, to pour us out a blessing such as we shall not have room enough to receive? May the Lord send prosperity! Amen, say we! Amen from our hearts! Amen, we hope, all God's saints will say! May the blessing speedily be sent; since we have the first matter I am hopeful.

But many will urge discouragements. "How is it likely," says one, "that we can hope to make an impression upon the present age? What means have we but the simple gospel of Jesus Christ?" We are certainly not among the wealthy, and we count not among us the great ones of the land. Our membership has always been, and still is, among the poor. How shall we expect to tell upon so huge a city as this, or to exert any influence upon so great a country? And, above all, how shall we make any impress upon the population of the whole globe? My dear brothers and sisters, we are weak, but we are not weaker than the first Disciples of Christ. Neither were they learned, nor were they the wealthy of the earth; fishermen, the

most of them, by no means men of cultivated ability—their tramp was that of a legion that went forth to conquer as well as to fight. Wherever they went and wielded the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, their enemies were put to confusion. It is true they died in the conflict. Some of them were slain by the sword, and others of them were torn in sunder by wild beasts; but in all these things they were more than conquerors through Him who loved them. The primitive church did tell upon its age, and left a seed behind which the whole earth could not destroy; and so shall we by God's grace if we are equally set upon it, equally filled with the divine life, equally resolved by any means and by all means to spread abroad the savor of Jesus Christ's name: our weakness shall be our strength, for God shall make it to be the platform upon which the omnipotence of His divine grace shall be displayed. Keep together, beloved, keep close to Christ; close up your ranks; heed the battle cry; hold fast the faith; quit yourselves like men in the conflict, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Only may the King Himself lead us onward to the fray, and we shall not fear the result.

Having thus looked at the precedents of that prosperity enjoyed by the church at Jerusalem, we shall, this evening, with deep earnestness, *ask your attention to the means by which a like prosperity may be procured for such churches as do not enjoy it now;* secondly, we shall have a word or two upon *the results of such prosperity;* and then, thirdly, upon *the alternative which is before every church, either to obtain such prosperity or else to mourn over grievous evils.*

I. WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS PROSPERITY MAY BE PROCURED?

If we pant to see the word of God increase, multitudes added to the disciples, and a great company of those who are least likely to be saved brought in, there must be an adequate instrumentality. Nothing can survive without the operation of

the Holy Spirit and the smile from heaven. Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase. We must never begin our catalog of outward means without referring to that blessed and mysterious potentate who abides in the church, and without whom nothing is good, nothing efficient, and nothing successful—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
With all Your quickening powers."

This should be our first prayer whenever we attempt to serve God, for if not, we begin with pride, and can little hope to succeed by prowess. If we go the warfare at our own charges, we must not marvel if we return stained with defeat. O Spirit of the living God, if it were not for Your power we could not make the attempt, but when we rely upon You we go forward in confidence.

As for the ostensible means, would any church prosper, *there must be much plain preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.* I have been struck lately, in looking through the history of the Reformation, and of the times before the Reformation, with the remarkable downrightness of the testimony of the early preachers. If you look at the life of Farren you find him not preaching *about* the gospel, but preaching *the gospel.* So it was with John Calvin. He is looked upon now, of course, as a theologian only, but he was really one of the greatest of gospel preachers. When Calvin opened the Book and took a text, you might be sure that he was about to preach, "Through grace are you saved, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." And it was the same with Luther. Luther's preaching was just the ringing of a big bell, the note of which was always, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and live! It is not of works, lest any man should boast, but by faith are you saved, and by faith

alone." They spoke this, and they spoke it again and again; neither did they couch the doctrine in difficult words, but they labored with all their might, so to speak, that the farmer at the plow-tail should understand, and that the fish-wife should comprehend the truth of God. They did not aim at lofty periods and flowing eloquence—of rhetoric they had a most contemptible opinion, but they just dashed right on with this one truth, "He who believes has everlasting life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

And, my brothers and sisters, if we are to see the church of God really restored to her pristine glory, we must have back this plain, simple, gospel-preaching. I do believe that the hiding of the cross beneath the veil of fine language and learned dissertation is half the cause of the spiritual destitution of our country. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. I would sooner say these few words, and then cease my testimony, than utter the most splendid oration that ever streamed from the lips of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but not have declared the gospel of Christ. We must keep to this; this must be the hammer that we bring down upon the anvil of the human heart again, and again, and again. God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord; God forbid that we should know anything among men save Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified; look to Him—not to the priest, not to your good works, not to your prayers, not to your church attendance or your chapel attendance, but to Christ Jesus exalted! Look to him in faith, and God is willing to forgive you, able to forgive you, to receive you, to make you His children, and forever to glorify you with Himself. We must have much more of this plain preaching, and not only plain preaching but plain teaching. Sunday school teachers, you must teach this same gospel; I know *you* do, but full many Sunday school teachers do not. A certain

denomination has made the confession that after having had their schoolrooms crowded with children, they do not know that any of those children have afterwards come to be attendants at the places of worship. Miserable confession! Miserable teachers must they be! And have we not known teachers who believed in the doctrines of grace, and upstairs in the chapel they would have fought earnestly for them, but downstairs in the schoolroom they have driveled to the little children in this kind of way—"Be good boys and girls; keep the Sabbath; do not buy sweets on Sunday; mind your fathers and your mothers; be good, and you will go to heaven"—which is not true, and is not the gospel, for the same gospel is for little children as for grown-up men and women! It is not, "Do this and live," which is after the law that was given by Moses, but "Believe and live," which is according to the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ! Teachers must inculcate the gospel if they are to see the salvation of their classes; the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, for without this no great thing will be done!

And if we would see the gospel spread abroad in London as once it did in Geneva, as once, under John Knox, it did in Scotland, as it did in Luther's day throughout Germany, we *must have much holy living to back it all up.* After we have done the sermon, people say, "How about the people who attend there? What about the church members, are they upright? Are they such people as you can trust? What about their homes? Do they make good husbands? Are they good servants? Are they kind masters?" People will be sure to inquire of this, and if the report of our character is bad, it is all over with our testimony. The doctor may advertise, but if the patients are not cured, he is not likely to establish himself as being skilled in his art, and the preacher may preach, but if his people do not love the gospel, they kick down with their feet what he builds up with his hands.

As I told you this morning, the followers of the early Reformers were distinguished by the sanctity of their lives; when they were about to hunt out the Waldenses, the French king, who had some of them in his dominions, sent a priest to see what they were like, and he, honest man as he was, came back to the king and said, "As far as I could find, they seem to be much better Christians than we are; I am afraid they are heretics, but really they are so chaste, so honest, so upright, and so truly pious, that though I hate heresy—I hope Your Majesty does not suspect me on that account—yet I would that all Catholics were as good as they are." Now, this was what made the gospel victorious in those days—the stern integrity of those who received it, and thus it will be still. It cannot be otherwise. But if you become worldly, if you members of this church are just the same as other men who have no divine grace, and make no pretensions, what is the good of your profession? You are liars before God unless you live above the common life of the rest of mankind! Oh, to get back to the simplicity of Christian manners! I cannot go into particulars, and ordain that this you shall do, and that you shall avoid, but you know very well what the simplicity is, and were it carried out there is a great deal that is now practiced among professors, that would have to be given up at once. As the books were burned when Paul preached, so there would be a great deal to be burned in the Christian church if we had the Spirit of God in all His power to bring us back to the old simplicity of the Christian faith. And why not? If you put the sword into the scabbard, you cannot kill with it; you must pull it out, and let it glitter in all its naked sharpness. If you put the sword of the gospel into the scabbard of worldly conformity, as some of you do, you cannot expect that there will be any power in it! Draw it away from your worldly company, and your pernicious customs, and then shall you see

that it still has power to kill and to make alive. There must, then, be *holy living* as well as plain testimony.

Yet all this would not suffice if the church is to be multiplied and many are to be saved, unless we add *individual, personal exertion.* I am so full with one theme today, that if I plow in the same furrow this evening as I did this morning I cannot help it [See Sermon #792] for I am anxious to make that furrow very deep and broad. I believe that no Christian church can have prosperity if only a part of the members are active for the conversion of souls. Why, sirs, it has got to be a thought among Christians that we ministers are to do all the work of bringing souls to Christ, and that you are to sit still and enjoy the sermon, and perhaps criticize it and pull it to pieces. But this is not orthodox; according to Christ's law, every Christian is to be a minister in his own sphere; Every member of the church is to be active in spreading the faith which was delivered, not to the ministers, but delivered to the believers, *to every one of them,* that they might maintain it, and spread it according to the gift which the Spirit has given them. Shall I venture a parable? A certain band of men, like knights, had been exceedingly victorious in all their conflicts. They were men of valor and of indomitable courage; they had carried everything before them, and subdued province after province for their king. But all of a sudden they said in the council chamber, "We have at our head a most valiant warrior, one whose arm is stout enough to smite down 50 of his adversaries; would it not be better if, with a few such as he to go out to the fight, the mere men-at-arms who make up the ordinary ranks, were to stay at home? We would be much more at our ease; our horses would not so often be covered with foam, nor our armor be bruised in returning from the fray, and no doubt great things would be done." Now the foremost champions, with fear and trembling, undertook the task and went to the conflict, and they fought well, no one

could doubt it; to the best of their ability they unhorsed their foe and they did great exploits. But still, from the very hour in which that scheme was planned and carried out, no city was taken, no province was conquered, and they met together and said, "How is this? Our former prestige is forgotten; our ranks are broken; our flags are trailed in the dust; what is the cause of it?" When out spoke the champion, and said, "Of course it is so! How did you think that some 12 or 15 of us could do the work of all the thousands? When you all went to the fight and every man took his share, we dashed upon the foe like an avalanche, and crushed him beneath our tramp, but now that you stay at home and put us, but a handful, to do all the work, how can you expect that great things should be done?" So each man resolved to put on his helmet and his armor once again, and go to the battle, and victory returned. I speak to you tonight, I, one of the rank of God's servants, and I say, my brothers and sisters, if we are to have the victory you must be every one of you in the fight. We must not spare a single one, neither man nor woman, old nor young, rich nor poor, but you must each fight for the Lord Jesus according to your ability, that His kingdom may come, and that His will may be done upon earth even as it is in heaven. We shall see great things when you all agree to this and put it to practice.

Combined with this *there must be much earnest prayer*. The prayer of faith! Have we not held it in high esteem? Have we not made some considerable proof of it in this place? We hope to have more faith—a great increase both of volume and power. Nothing is impossible to the man who knows how to overcome heaven by wrestling intercession. When we have seen one, two, or 10, or 20 penitents converted, and when we have sometimes been heartily thankful that a 100 have been added to this church in a month, ought we to have been satisfied? Should we not have felt that the prayer which was blessed to the

conversion of a 100—had it been more earnest, might, in the divine purpose, have been answered with the conversion of a thousand? Why not? I do not know why London should not be shaken from end to end with gospel truth before this day 12 months from now. You will say, "We have not enough ministers." But God can make them! I tell you, sirs, He can find ministers for His truth—yes, if He willed it, among the very offscouring of the earth. He can take the worst of men, the vilest of the vile, and change their hearts, and make them preach the truth if He pleases. We are not to look to what we have. The witness of the senses only confuses those who would walk by faith. See what He did for the church in the case of Saul of Tarsus. He just went up to the devil's army, and took out a ringleader, and said to him, "Now, sir, you preach the gospel which once you despised." And who preached it better? Why, I should not wonder if before long in answer to prayer we see the Ritualistic clergy preaching the gospel! Who can tell—the Romish priests may yet do it, and repeat the tale of Luther and Melancthon! Were not Luther, and Melancthon, and Calvin, and their comrades brought out of Papal darkness to show light unto the people? We have heard with our ears, why may we not see with our eyes the mighty works of God? The Lord can find His men where we know nothing about them. "Of these stones," said the Baptist, as he pointed to the banks of the Jordan, "Of these stones God can raise up children unto Abraham." And as He could then, so He can now! Let us not despair. If we will but *pray* for it, our heavenly Father will deny His children nothing. Come, do but come, in simplicity of heart, and *according to your faith* shall it be done unto you.

Would you see the church greatly increase and the kingdom come to the throne of the Son of David? Then *we must all get a more intense, glowing, spiritual life.* Do you understand me?

There are two persons yonder. They are both alive, but one of them lies in bed. He wakes, but he says, as the sluggard—

"You have awakened me too soon,
I must slumber again."

And when he gets up, he gazes round with vacant wonder and strange bewilderment. He has no energy, he is listless, and we say of him, "What a lifeless creature he is!" "He is living, but with how little vitality! Now, you see another man. His sleep is short; he wakes soon; he is out to his business; takes down the shutters; he is standing behind the counter waiting upon this customer and that; he is all active; he is here, there, and everywhere, nothing is neglected; his eyes are wide open, his brain is active, his hands are busy, his limbs are all nimble. Well, what a different man that is! You are glad to get this second man to be your employee; he is worth 10 times the wages of the first. There is life in them both, but what a difference there is between them! The one is eagerly living, the other is drawling out an insipid existence. And how many Christians there are of this sort! They wander in on a Sunday morning, sit down, get their hymn book, listen to the prayer without joining in it, hear the sermon, but might almost as well not have heard it, go home, get through the Sunday, go into business. With them there is never any secret prayer for the conversion of men, no trying to talk to children, or servants, or friends, about Christ, no zeal, no holy jealousy, no flaming love, no generosity, no consecrating of the substance to God's cause! This is too faithful a picture of a vast number of professing Christians! Would it were not so! On the other hand, we see another kind of man—one who is renewed in the spirit of his mind. Though he has to be in the world, his main thoughts are how he can use the world to promote the glory of Christ. If he

goes into business, he wants to make money that he may have the means to give bountifully for the spread of the gospel. If he meets with friends, he tries to thrust a word in edgeways for his Master, and whenever he gets an opportunity, he will speak, or write—but he will be aiming to do something for Him who has bought him with His precious blood. Why, I could pick out, if it were right to mention names, some here who are all alive, till their bodies seem to be scarcely strong enough for the real vitality and energy of their souls. Oh, these are the cream of the church, the pick and choice of the flock, the men who are true men, and the women who are the true daughters of Jerusalem! The Lord multiply the number of such!

Yes, may He make every one of us to be such, for I am afraid that we all of us need quickening. I know I do myself; it is a long time since I preached a sermon that I was satisfied with; I scarcely remember ever having done so. You do not know, for you cannot hear my groans when I go home, Sunday after Sunday, and wish that I could learn to preach somehow or other—wish that I could discover the way to touch your hearts and your consciences, for I seem to myself to be just like the fire when it needs stirring; the coals have gotten black when I want them to flame forth. If I could but say in the pulpit what I feel in my study, or if I could but get out of my mouth what I have tried to get into my own soul, then I think I should preach indeed, and move your souls. Yet perhaps God will use our weakness, and we may use it with ourselves, to stir us up to greater strength. You know the difference between slow motion and rapidity. If there were a cannon ball rolled slowly down these aisles, it might not hurt anybody; it might be very large, very huge, but it might be so rolled along that you might not rise from your seats in fear. But if somebody would give me a rifle, and ever so small a ball, I reckon that if the ball flew along the Tabernacle, some of you might find it very difficult

to stand in its way. It is the *force* that does the thing. So, it is not the great man who is loaded with learning that will achieve work for God; it is the man, who, however small his ability, is filled with force and fire, and who rushes forward in the energy which heaven has given him, that will accomplish the work—the man who has the most intense spiritual life, who has real vitality at its highest point of tension, and living, while he lives, with all the force of his nature for the glory of God. Put these three or four things together, and I think you have the means of prosperity.

II. Time flies, and therefore while I briefly hint, I must leave you largely to meditate, **THE RESULTS WHICH FLOW FROM THIS PROSPERITY**—*Souls are saved!*

John Owen said that if you had to preach to a whole nation for 12 months in order to win one soul, it would be good wages, for a soul is so priceless that to redeem it from going down to the pit of hell would be worth the expenditure of all human strength. Richard Knill once said that if there were only one unconverted person in the wilds of Siberia, and that God had ordained that every Christian in the world must go and talk to that one person before he would be converted, it would be an exceedingly little thing for us all to do, to go all the way there through the cold, and frost, and snow, to win that one soul! And he was right, and I may well stir you up to energy when the result will be the conversion of souls.

The name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified. Who would not wish to live, or even to die, for this?—

"Let Him be crowned with majesty,
Who bowed His head in death,
And let His praise be sounded high,
By all things that have breath."

If you have not forgotten what He suffered for you, dear friends, do you not wish to see Him crowned with many crowns? He wore the crown of thorns for you, would not you wish to see the fruit of His soul's travail, the removal of the curse, the extension of His kingdom, the honor of His fame, the growing enthusiasm of His subjects—to make His excellence apparent, and His praise more and more famous to the very end of time? I know you would, and therefore I ask you to strive together with us in your prayers and your efforts, that the number of His disciples may be multiplied greatly.

Moreover, the result will be to build up the church itself, for there is no good done in the name of Jesus which does not redound to the satisfaction of His bride. If you do good to another, you are taking the shortest way to do good to your own soul. As those who promote sanitary measures for the benefit of the neighborhood are thereby favoring the conditions of their own health; so the promulgation of saving knowledge throughout the world is augmenting the peace and the welfare of our own hearts, and of all who are already saved. Truly, I believe, that some persons are never comfortable in religion because they are selfish in it. If they began to live with some objective, their constant distress of mind would soon be rolled away. May God, therefore, stir us up, that the whole church may thereby be blessed.

III. But I must now come to the point with which I proposed to finish, namely, **THE ALTERNATIVE WHICH I THINK STANDS BEFORE THIS CHURCH AND EVERY OTHER CHURCH.**

Either we must get a high state of prosperity, or else we shall lack what is to be dreaded to the very uttermost. How many churches there are which have proved the truth of what I am now going to say! They have not tried to increase; they have not cared about conversions, and very soon there has

been murmuring. One did not like the minister; another did not like the deacons; a third objected to a brother that was introduced, and all this, perhaps, was quietly hushed up because they were too respectable to come to an open disturbance, but still there it was—the fire in the embers; and thus it kept on till, by-and-by, they come to one of two things, either lethargy or else division. They settled down as quiet and sober religious people. The minister was not excited; not he! The people could not be stirred. The boast was that there were so many carriages on a Sunday outside the chapel. Some trusted in chariots and some in horses—but there was nothing about conversion. Why, I know churches whose baptismal pool would have been green by now if the water had been standing in it, so few have been added to their number. And yet they are not at all dissatisfied. "No," the good deacon says, "you know our pew-rents keep up very well! We have not a seat to let in the gallery!" "Ah!" says the minister, "And while we have the most respectable people in the town come among us, we do not approve of these revivalists down the back street who are trying to catch those poor sinners; if they want them, they may have them, for we do not want them." That is the style in which some of these people talk. If they do not say it in words, they think it in their hearts. Well, and when a church does get into that dreadful state, it becomes noxious as a very dunghill. And when there is very little spiritual animation, there soon comes to be the ferment of very great division. Somebody or other cannot bear this. Some young and fervent spirit speaks out about it, and the minister does not like it, the deacons do not like it, and they try to put him down. Then half-a-dozen more of the members think that he is right, and the life that is in the church wakes up. The trumpet is sounded, and there is a troop led off to establish a healthy organization somewhere else—and the old corpse is left to rot as it may, and to decay as many churches do. Now,

were I a prophet, I might tell you what should come to pass in latter days; but speaking as a monitor, rather than as a seer, I should not wonder but I could almost tell what you will come to by-and-by. In my day may it never, never be; but you will get to be very respectable over at the Tabernacle after I die! You will have an organ, I dare say, and you will get a fine parson to deliver the most polished discourses to you, and where you will then drift I can readily guess. The Lord have mercy upon you, and save you from it! This is the tendency, however, of every church. It matters not what it is. Where the most honest, simple, faithful preachers have been, the people get to be too great for the gospel, and too proud to receive the truth of God in the love of it. May it never happen in our days, however, and if earnest prayer can prevent it, may it never happen as long as the world stands, but till Christ comes may you be an honest, truth-loving people, striving together for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and never departing from the earnest simplicity of the faith. But unless we keep up the earnest spirit among us, we shall very soon degenerate into the ordinary dead-alive Christianity which is only half as good as nothing at all, because it gives men a name to live when they are dead.

The picture I have drawn may seem to you too highly colored, but I assure you that I have seen such things. I am not old, but I have lived long enough to see churches go in this way, yes, and churches, too, that were once warm-hearted. I have seen young members who were once earnest grow cold. I have seen old members who were once content to worship with the humble ones, get a little up in the world; then "of course" they must go to the State church! I have seen congregations broken to pieces, and churches split up—and the bottom of it all has been because the vital godliness has been drained out of the system, the love of God, has not remained in the heart, for when the rich man has the love of God in his heart, he delights

to see the multitude gathered together; he is glad to do his part, and help in all he can. And the learned man, if the preaching does not always suit him, yet he is glad to think that the unlearned have a preacher whom they can understand. Whoever the man may be or however great and famous, if he loves Christ, he is satisfied with the simple truth of God. "Give me that," he says, "and that is enough; I can get my fine thinking and my fine reading in the weekdays if I need it; on the Sabbath let me hear of Jesus! Let me hear the story of the cross! Let me see sinners led to Calvary—it is all I need, and I am well content if I have this."

Are there not many here tonight who are unconverted? They will wonder, perhaps, what I am making all this stir about. Let me address myself personally to you. O you unconverted women, it *is about you* that we are concerned. And *you*, you unconverted men, it *is about you* that we are anxious; we are seeking after you. Why, for our own sakes, if there were none to be saved, we might be content to hear far different doctrine from this. The doctrines of grace are sweet in our ears, and our souls would be well enough fed by them, but because we want to see you saved, we have to talk with you and attend to these practical matters since we want to see you brought to Christ. Now, look at the text, and it may give you some comfort if you are willing to lay hold on Christ. Do you notice it is said that, "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"? Now, these priests were they who conspired to crucify Christ! They were once the bigoted enemies of the gospel, but they became obedient to the faith; why should not you, then? I know the devil tells you that you have been too great a sinner. That cannot be. Perhaps he reminds you that you have been a scoffer, or have lived an immoral life, or have been self-righteous, which is as heinous a sin as any other. Ah, well, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from *all* sin. A young

woman wrote to me the other day—I do not know who she is, but she said, "I cannot tell anybody, but I have done such-and-such, a dreadful sin indeed, if my mother knew it, it would break her heart." I do not know her, and therefore her mother will never know it from me, but she asks, "Can *I* be saved?" Young woman, you can! She says that she is worse than Magdalene, for Magdalene did not know Christ when she was a sinner, but she did know the gospel, and yet sinned. Oh, well, if you are worse than Magdalene, Christ will be glorified in saving such a one as you are! Only come with all your sin about you, and throw yourself at His feet! Trust Him! Trust Him! Do Him the honor to believe that He can save even such an abominable sinner as you have been! Though you have gone to the utmost extremity of human guilt, and looked over the gulf of endless misery, yet still believe Him; trust Him, and He will be as good as ever you can think Him to be, for when you think your highest thoughts of Him, He is higher than your highest thoughts, and can save even to the uttermost! The *priests* were obedient to the faith—why not you? They believed in Christ, saw the fold, entered in, and were saved; why should not *you* be like they? Did you notice how it is described? They were, *"obedient to the faith."* Then it seems that the gospel is all summed up in that word "faith." To be obedient to the faith; to believe that Jesus is the Son of God; to trust Him because He has suffered in your place; to believe that the divine justice is satisfied with the death of Christ, and to rely upon that satisfaction which Christ has rendered, that is to be saved, to be obedient to the faith.

We sang at the Lord's Table, this morning, that sweet verse which really is the quintessence of the gospel, and therefore I will repeat it to you, though you already know it so well—

"Nothing in my hand I bring:
Simply to Your cross I cling;
Naked, come to You for dress;
Helpless, look to You for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die."

Yes, just as you are, come and depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved! And this is what the stir is all about, we cannot bear that you should drift down to destruction, we cannot bear that there should be cataracts of souls leaping down the eternal gulf! We cannot endure that Satan should gloat his malicious soul with the prey of tens of thousands of mankind. We cannot bear that Christ should stand neglected, that His cross should be despised, that His blood should be trampled on. O come to Him! He will not reject you! He who comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out! Breathe a silent prayer to Him now. Cast your soul upon Him, sink or swim—

"Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude,
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

But He can do it! Rely on Him, and eternal life is yours!

Brothers and sisters, as we are in the New Year now, and have only reached the second Sabbath in it, let us begin and sweep out of the house the old leaven of ease and self-indulgences and lukewarmness, and let it be our cry, before we go to our beds tonight, that the Lord would make us to be real living Christians, make us flames of fire from this time forth to truly serve Him who served us even to the death. You will

never get to be too warm. I am persuaded you will not be too zealous. I only wish I could get into such a devout enthusiasm myself as that of the apostle Paul when, compelled by the love of Christ, he said, "Whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God." When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants. How much more unprofitable when we have done so little! The Lord quicken this church! The February meetings are coming on, when we shall be especially and earnestly seeking the ingathering of souls. Believers, you who are mighty with God in secret, pray for these February meetings, that the month may be a holy month to us—the best month we have ever had, that more may be gathered into the church than ever have been in our times. Make that a point of prayer, and prove God now whether He will not hear you, and you shall find He will to your soul's comfort. Amen.

803 ISRAEL'S GOD AND GOD'S ISRAEL – DEUT. 33:26-28

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, March 29th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellence on the clouds. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you; and will say, Destroy them! Then Israel shall dwell in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone, in a land of grain and new wine; His heavens shall also drop dew." — Deuteronomy 33:26-28

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Deuteronomy 33:6-29]

MOSES LIVED to be 120 years of age, and his life was divided into three periods of 40 years. The first 40 he spent as the son of Pharaoh's daughter in the courts of Egypt; the second in the wilderness, at the foot of Horeb, as a shepherd; and the third 40 he reigned as king in Jeshurun, leading the Lord's people from Egypt to the borders of the Promised Land. Observe how each of these periods terminated. The time of his apprenticeship in Egypt concluded with his refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, his avowal of brotherhood with the afflicted Israelites, his attempt to avenge their wrongs, and his consequent flight from Egypt, because of the king.

Brothers and sisters, it is to be desired that thus our original connection with the world may once and for all be snapped—we are not of it though we are in it; and may divine grace so work in us that, like Moses, we may count the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, and, therefore, may flee from all worldly conformity, resolving to come out from among the ungodly, not touching the unclean thing, but separating ourselves, cost what it may, from the world which lies in the wicked one. It will be well for us, if that which divides us from the world shall be as clear, sharp, definite, and impassable as that which cut off Moses from Egypt. The second part of Moses' life was spent in the solitudes of Horeb, and was concluded by a manifestation of God and a commission for service. He saw Jehovah in the burning bush: the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed, and he was bid to deliver the Lord's message to Pharaoh. Yes and our times of quiet meditation are good for nothing if they do not end and culminate in bright discoveries of God, and a call to heavenly labor. It is of little use to be in the wilderness unless God is seen there; and meditation and retirement shall be but as barren fields unless they yield to us the harvest of communion with the invisible, and give us sheaves of blessing for our brethren! You bookworms, you solitary students and men of meditation, think of this, and pray that your meditations may so end likewise. The third part of his life closed with the song which is now before us. The last 40 years were crowded with events and full of trials. He was greatly vexed with the unholy spirit of the people; yet, in meekness and patience he endured with them, and was tender as a nurse with her child. He led the people like a flock out of Egypt, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, in the midst of miracles and wonders; and, then, afterwards, for 40 years he conducted them as they went winding about through the wild desert. A great man, indeed, was Moses in

what he saw, and did, and said, and suffered. His life was spent in unmeasured toil; from the day when he first went in to Pharaoh, till he climbed the steeps of Nebo, he must have been, night and day, incessantly engaged, and yet he finished his life-work with a song! Even thus let it be our prayer, that we, bearing the burden and heat of the day, may hear in our souls the voice, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter you into the joy of your Lord," and then may we, in our departing hours, pour out a stream of praise unto our God, blessing and magnifying the Most High who has worked our works in us, and made us, unworthy as we are, to be instruments fit for His use.

We shall now consider these words which compose the last stanzas of the song of Moses. May the Holy Spirit remarkably assist me because I am, this morning, so unusually unfit for ministering among you, that the weakness of the creature will be painfully manifest! Both brain and voice are choked up, but the Holy One of Israel helps our infirmities.

I. Observe, in the first place, that Moses' song **MAGNIFIES ISRAEL'S GOD**. He declares, *"There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides upon the heaven to help you, and in His excellence on the clouds."*

The Lord is the great joy and the delightful portion of His people. In nothing were the tribes of Israel so favored as in having the true God to be their God. This was the great glory and the peculiar privilege of the chosen people, that the only living and Most High Jehovah had manifested Himself unto them and to their fathers, had taken them to be His people, and given Himself to be their God. Truly, when Moses looked upon the gods of Egypt, a country so superstitious that the satirist wrote of them, "O happy nation, whose gods grow in their own gardens"—when he heard the wild mythology of their idolatry, he might well have said, "There is none among them all that is

like to the God of Jeshurun." Perhaps Moses had seen those vast catacombs of idolized animals which Egyptian discoverers have lately opened, where the crocodiles, cats, and birds which had been worshipped in life, were afterwards carefully consigned. Wise as Egypt professed to be, she preserved her dead gods in myriads. Dead gods! Hear it and be amazed at the folly of humanity. Truly, the fancies of the most civilized nations have invented no deity comparable for a moment to the living God who made the heavens and the earth. The plagues of Egypt, as we have often been told, were all aimed against the gods of Egypt, and there was not a single deity adored by Egyptians that could stand against the Most High God. The river which they adored became loathsome to them when it was turned into blood, and yielded frogs in such abundance that the land stunk. Their sacred insects swarmed till the very dust was full of horrible life, and the land was corrupted. Vain were their soothsayers and their idols, for Jehovah laughed them to scorn! Not only was Pharaoh put to the worst before Jehovah, but Egypt's gods were humbled. When all the chivalry of Egypt came to the Red Sea, and descended into the space which God had cleared to make a highway for His people, when the bounding billows leaped upon them, covered as they were with the emblems of their false deities, and bearing standards inscribed with idolatrous signs, there was a triumph over all the idol gods as well as over their votaries. Moses saw this, and therefore sang, "Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Moses was often grieved when he saw the people of Israel going back in their thoughts to the foul idolatrous house of bondage, when he knew that they were ready at any time to make the image of Isis, the golden calf, and bow before it. He mourned that they harbored the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god,

Remphan. He must have felt a holy horror that these images of mere demons, these pieces of gilded wood and carved stone should ever be objects of Israel's adoration, for what had they done? What could they do? They had eyes, but they could not see; they had hands, but they could not handle, feet, but they could not move; but the God of Jeshurun made the heavens and then, before their eyes, made the heavens to drop with manna! He made the earth, and for their supply made the flinty rocks to flow with rivers! He it was who went before His people with a pillar of fire and cloud, made them victorious over all their enemies, and promised to bring them into the promised land. "Well," said the man who had seen all this, "There is none like the God of Jeshurun."

Brothers and sisters, there is no fear that you or I shall worship any false god literally, as Israel so basely did, yet there is still need to say, "Flee idolatry." Among all the comforts which you now enjoy, and in which there is always the tendency for you to find idols, there is none like the God of Jeshurun. Your home, the place of your love, must always be dear to you; your relatives and the children of God's gift must always be the fond objects of your affection, but remember John's words, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." None of your dearest and most cherished loves are at all worthy to sit upon the throne of your heart—far down in the scale must they be placed when the God who gave them to you is brought into comparison. That broad bosom of your beloved husband beats fondly and faithfully, but when death lays it low, as before long it must, how wretched will be your condition if you have not an everlasting Comforter upon whose breast to lean! Those dear little sparkling eyes which are like stars in the heaven of your social joy, if these are the gods of your idolatry, how wretched will you be when their brightness is dim, and the mother's joy is moldering back to dust. Happy is he who has

an everlasting joy and an undying comfort; and there is none in this respect like the God of Jeshurun! There would be fewer broken hearts if hearts were more completely the Lord's; we should have no rebellious spirits if, when we had our joys, we used them lawfully, and did not too much build our hopes upon them. All beneath the moon will die. Everything on these shores ebbs and flows like the sea. Everything beneath the sun will be eclipsed. You will not find in time that which is only to be discovered in eternity, namely, an immutable and unfailing source of comfort. "There is none like the God of Jeshurun."

Let me remind you that this is the case with all the objects of human pursuit. Some have lived for wealth, but when they have gained it, they have been disappointed with the result; though they have heaped gold in the bag, and added house to house, and field to field, yet their aching spirit has still craved for food; for gold can no more feed a soul than dust can satisfy the hunger of the body. Some have followed the star of ambition; they would be famous and make unto themselves a name like the great men who are on the earth; and when they have gained the bubble reputation, they have wept to find that, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Even the best of earthly joys pall upon the appetites of those who attain them. Christian, stand to your God. Be it your life to live for Him who made you, to live in Him who bought you, to live with Him who chose you, to live like Him who lived and died for you. You shall find that such an object of life will satisfy all the powers and passions of your soul, for to this end your soul was formed and suited! You shall run in this race without weariness, and walk without fainting, and if you get the prize, it is one that shall not wither in your hand like the ivy wreath of Greece, or like the laurel crown of Rome, decay upon your brow, for you shall win a crown of life that fades not away.

Moses, in the particular words here used, seems to intimate that there is none like the God of Jeshurun as the ground of our confidence. Now, you who have trusted in God, remember there is room for you to trust Him still more; and the more you shall confide in Him, the more emphatically will you declare, "There is none like the God of Jeshurun." If we rely upon men, we put trust in fickleness itself. brothers and sisters, my own public life enables me to speak very plainly and positively here; if we trust in men, even the very best of men, either they may deceive us or else, good enough though their intentions may be, they will not be able to bear us up in times of great and serious difficulty. If we depend upon the generosity of our fellow men in carrying on the Lord's work, especially if we depend upon committees and upon the usual machinery which is so popular nowadays, we shall very often have to cry, "Woe is me!" But if we trust in God, there may be famine over the entire world, but there shall be corn in Egypt for the Lord's people; and if every society that depends upon its subscribers goes to rack and ruin, we who depend upon the Everlasting God will stand fast and firm. There are two kinds of policy adopted by the Christian church nowadays—the one is to trust in man, and the other to trust in the living God; and I daily notice that where *man* is trusted to more and more, there comes the withering and the fading of the leaf, but where *God* is relied upon, that work becomes like a tree planted by the rivers of water, the leaf whereof does not wither, and which brings forth its fruit in its season, and whatever it does is prosperous. If I had to address any Christian minister today, I would say to him, "Let the very first point of all your Christian policy be to trust in the Lord, for cursed is he who trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm; but blessed is he who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." I say the same to every one of you, my brothers and sisters in Christ—place your reliance upon the Most High; get

a good leverage upon the Rock of Ages, for when you are firmly fixed there, you may lift a world of difficulties and remove a mountain of troubles. Oh, to be clean delivered from every confidence that is not derived from the covenant God of Israel!

Brothers and sisters, however sharp the strokes that bring us down to this, they are blessed strokes; however bitter may be the medicines that rinse our mouths, and put them out of taste with worldly confidences—I say, however bitter they are, they are all the healthier, and the Lord be thanked for them. When we drink from the pure fountain at the fountainhead, and turn from the stagnant puddles of the broken cisterns, cleaving to our God and to our God alone, we are then growing in divine grace, and only then. That Moses meant this, I think is clear, from the words he uses, "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to help you, And in His excellence on the clouds." Men can come to our help, but they travel slowly, creeping along the earth. Lo, our God comes riding in the heavens. They who travel on the earth may be stopped by enemies, they certainly will be hindered; but He who rides the heavens cannot be stayed nor even delayed! When Jehovah's excellence comes flying upon the sky on the wings of the wind, how gloriously are displayed the swiftness, the certainty, and the all-sufficiency of delivering grace. God has ways to help us that we dream not of. "Your way, O God, is in the sea." He has a way in the tempest, and the clouds are the dust of His feet; Jehovah has made for Himself a highway, a chariot road along the heavens, that His purposes of love may never be hindered; if we will but trust in God, invisible spirits shall fight for us. The great wheels of providence shall revolve for our good, and God the Eternal, Himself, dressed in robes of war like a valiant champion, shall come forth to join us in our quarrel. Fall back upon yourselves, lean upon your fellow creatures, trust upon earth-born confidences, and you fall upon

a rotten foundation that shall give way beneath you; but rest upon your God and upon your God, alone, and the stars in heaven shall fight for you. Yes, the stars in their courses, and things present, and things to come, and heights, and depths, and all the creatures subservient to the will of the omnipotent Creator shall work together for good to you, seeing that you love God, and are depending upon His power. Thus, and thus sweetly, does Israel's prophet sing of Israel's God.

II. The second note of the song is **ISRAEL'S SAFETY**. "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Two sentences, with a little variation of expression, containing essentially the same sense; God is first said to be the refuge of His people, that is, when they have strength enough to flee to Him, He protects them, but it is delightfully added, "underneath are the everlasting arms," that is, when they have *not* strength enough to flee to Him, but faint where they stand, there are His arms ready to bear them up in their utmost extremity!

First, *God is the refuge of His people;* and He is this, let me remind you, always and under all difficulties. If it should rain today on your journey home, you will be glad of a little shelter beneath some friendly doorway. It would not have killed you, certainly, if you had not found the refuge, but still it was comfortable to be protected. Now remember that your God is not only a *shelter* from the avenging tempest at the last, but from the little present trials of the day. Do we not lose very much of comfort by our forgetting that God is as willing to help us in our minor sorrows as in our major griefs? He is your refuge, dear friend, from a little loss, a little pain, a little grief—tell Him all. As a father thinks nothing little that belongs to his well-loved child, so will your heavenly Father think no grief too little for His notice! He who guides a sparrow, and counts the hairs of your head, will be a refuge for you in your daily griefs. But

suppose a storm of thunder and lightning should come on today, and a perfect hurricane should blow, then some neighbor's house would be a shelter which you would value more; and so your God is a refuge to you when your heavier griefs come on. Do not, I pray you, think that anything in providence can be too difficult for God, or that your position can ever be beyond the reach of His delivering arm. If you have lost all, as long as you have not lost Him, your losses shall turn out to be gains. If your friends and children should sicken and die, yet you are not alone as long as the ever-living Father is with you. It is a blessed thing to learn habitually to make use of God; there is no benefit in having a friend if we do not use him by making application to him. There are some friends who would love us less if we were often to avail ourselves of their friendship, but our God is such that He would have us draw upon Him; He delights to give; it is His pleasure to assist those who trust Him. Come, make your needs, your burdens known; hesitate not, stand not away with an unholy bashfulness, but with a childlike boldness approach your heavenly Father, and tell Him what your griefs may be, be they little or be they great, for the Lord is a refuge for us, a sure refuge, an open refuge, a constant refuge—a refuge at this very moment if we have but divine grace to flee to him.

Moses, I believe, in this passage alluded to one remarkable privilege of the children of Israel in the wilderness. All day long the cloudy pillar covered them. I do not think of it as being simply a column of smoke arising from the center of the Tabernacle; it was such, but besides that it covered the whole camp as a vast canopy or pavilion, so that in the great and terrible wilderness they fainted not under the burning heat of the sun; this pillar of cloud interposed a friendly shade so that they passed through the wilderness beneath the wings of God! At night their encampment would have been like a great city

wrapped in darkness, but the pillar of fire supplied to them a light far superior to that which glows in London or in Paris through the art of man; that great flaming pillar lit up every tent and habitation, so that in point of fact there was no night there. They were always sheltered by God both by day and by night. If they strayed away from the camp for a little time in the heat of the sun, they had only to come flying back, and there that emblem of the Present God became their shelter! Or at night, if they wandered for a while, that vast blazing lamp conducted them back again to their place of rest. So it is with us. In nights of trouble and grief, the fire of divine Comfort glows within us; the precious promises are round about us, and we rejoice in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. And when by day we travel over this burning wilderness to the rest appointed, God interposes perpetually the sweet presence of His love to screen us from the sharper sorrows of the world, that we may still, while walking onward to heaven, behold the shield of heaven uplifted above our heads.

Dwell, for only one second upon that word, "The *eternal* God is your refuge." Brothers and sisters, God is not only our refuge, but He is such as the *eternal God*! I do not understand, my beloved, how some of the very best of men are satisfied to believe that God will forsake His people. I thank God I cannot receive their teaching. I believe that He is my refuge today, and He was my refuge in the days of my youth, and when this hair is gray, He will still be my refuge. Yes, and when the sun of time has set beneath the horizon, never to rise again, and eternity is ushered in, the same refuge will remain to all His believing people. "The eternal God is your refuge."

What are you doing, my brother, over there? What are you doing? You found God to be your refuge years ago, when you were in great distress, and you are in some fresh trouble today, and you fancy God will not help you? He is the *eternal* God,

man! If He had changed, if He had died, you might be in despair, but since He is eternal and immutable, surely He will do for you today what He did for you then. Cast your present burden upon Him who helped you in the burdens past. "The eternal God is your refuge."

It is all very well for me to stand here and talk about this, but the sweetness lies in getting under the refuge. It is of no use to know, when you are climbing the storm-beaten Alps, that there is a refuge on the hillside against the storm, unless you get *into* it. Beloved believer, get into your God this morning! I will tell you what I have often had to do. I have had perplexities in the work which grows out of the church, and I have mused over them, and puzzled my brain till I could see no way of escape; and at last I have come to this conclusion—"It is beyond me altogether. Gracious God, take it in Your hands." I have put it upon the shelf, and have resolved I would never think of it again—if God did not see to it, I would not. I gave up the case to Him, and I have often found that then the matter has been cleared up directly. Whereas, while I was fretting and worrying like a drowning man, I struggled myself deeper and deeper into the water, but when I laid quite still, I could float and help came. Do so with your troubles. When you have done the little you can do, then say, "This is evidently a thing beyond my power; what is the use of my straining at it? I am told God will appear for me in the time of my extremity, and so He shall. I will have nothing to do with it." "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never allow the righteous to be moved."

The second sentence is, *"Underneath are the everlasting arms."* This seems to anticipate that the child of God may be in such a condition that he cannot run into the refuge, but falls down in a fainting fit. And where does he fall? Into hell? Ah, no, he is *redeemed,* and hell can never enclose a redeemed soul. Where

does he fall, then? Fall to the hard, unsympathizing earth, to lie without help till he is strong enough to recover himself? Not at all; even when he falls, he falls into the everlasting arms. I will mention some times when a Christian needs these arms peculiarly. These are when he is in a state of great elevation of mind. Sometimes God takes His servants and puts them on the pinnacle of the temple. Satan does it sometimes; God does it too—puts His servants up on the very pinnacle, where they are so full of joy that they scarcely know how to contain themselves. "Whether in the body or out of the body they cannot tell." Well, now, suppose they should fall? It is so easy for a man, when full of ecstasy and ravishment, to make a false step and slip. Ah, but in such moments, "underneath are the everlasting arms." They are safe enough, as safe as though they were in the Valley of Humiliation, for underneath are the arms of God. Sometimes He puts a man in such a position in service—there must be leaders in the Lord's church, captains and mighty men of war, and the Lord sometimes calls a man, and says to him, "Now, be Moses to this people." Such positions are fraught with temptation, and is God's servant in greater danger than an ordinary Christian? Yes, he is, if left to himself, but he will not be left to himself, for God does not treat His captains as David treated Uriah, and put them in the forefront of the battle, to leave them, that they may be slain by the enemy. No, if our God calls a man to tread the high places of the field; that man shall say with Habakkuk, "He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me walk upon my high places." "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Another period of great need is after extraordinary exaltations and enjoyments, when it often happens that God's servants are greatly depressed. I suppose some brothers and sisters neither have much elevation or depression. I could almost wish to share their peaceful life, for I am much tossed

up and down, and although my joy is greater than the most of men, my depression of spirit is such as few can have any idea of. This week has been in some respects the crowning week of my life, but it closed with a horror of great darkness of which I will say no more than this. I bless God that at my worst, underneath me I found the everlasting arms; what a grand day that was for Elijah when he saw the fire come down upon his bullock, in answer to his prayer, and he cried in holy wrath, "Take the prophets of Baal, let not one escape." I think I see the grim pleasure in the prophet's face as he saw them taken to the brook and slain; behold his exhilaration as he binds up his loins and runs before Ahab's chariot, keeping pace with the monarch's horses with an agility in which soul and body joined. And then, what happens a day or two afterwards? In the wilderness, all alone, he has fled from a woman's face, and you hear him cry, "Let me die, I am no better than my fathers." Yes, the man who never was to die at all, prayed that he might die. Just so, high exaltations involve deep depressions. But what was under Elijah when he fell down in that fainting fit under the juniper tree? Why, underneath were the everlasting arms, and so shall it be with you who are called thus to fall into the depths of depression—the eternal arms shall be lower than you are. beloved, there are many such occasions in which the spirit sinks sometimes through a sense of sin, through disappointments, through desertions of friends, through beholding the decay of the Lord's work, through a lack of success in our ministry, or a thousand other mischiefs which may all cast us low, yes, as low as Jonah, who went, he says, to the bottoms of the mountains; but when Jonah went to the lowest, underneath him were the everlasting arms; and when the earth, with her bars, was about him forever, and the weeds were wrapped about his head, he came up again, because still

lower than he was the hand of God; the everlasting arms were underneath him still.

There is blessed comfort when we come to die. I remember being at the funeral of one of our brothers, and a dear friend in Christ offered prayer in which there was a sentence which struck me, "O Lord," he said, "You have laid our friend low, but we thank You that he cannot go any lower, for underneath him are the everlasting arms." Yes, underneath the bodies of the saints are the everlasting arms of God; they cannot sink to hell, they must rise again at the sound of the archangel's trumpet. Think, next time you go to the grave with your dear one—you will fancy that you are putting the body into the cold earth to leave it there, but if you will think that there are God's arms at the bottom of that grave, you will drop your child into them, oh, so gently. You will put father and mother, yes, and the dearest one you have, softly and happily down into the Father's arms, believing that He will raise them up again after a little sleep upon His bosom.

You see here then, the safety of God's people. God is such a help to them that they shall not faint— or fainting, shall only fall into His arms.

III. The second half of the verse tells us of **ISRAEL'S FUTURE**. "He will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say, Destroy them!"

You have seen a man in our streets with a telescope through which you may see Venus, or Saturn, or Jupiter. Now, if that gentleman, instead of revealing the stars, could fix up a telescope, and undertake that everybody who looked through it should see his future life, I will be bound to say he would make his fortune very speedily, for there is a great desire among us all to know something of the future. Yet we need not be so anxious, for the great outlines of the future are very well known already; we have it on the best authority that in the future as in

the past, we shall meet with difficulties and contend with enemies. My text, like the telescope, reveals to those who trust in God what will become of their difficulties, and we see that they are to be overcome. God will work, and you will work. He shall thrust out your enemies, and He shall say to you, "Destroy them!" What may be our future lot, as I have said, we do not know, except that the Holy Spirit testifies that in every place, that bonds, and adversities, and struggles, and trials, certainly await us. We shall not have an easy path to heaven; as it has not been, so shall it not be, but onward till we lay aside this body we must contend for very life in spiritual things. How precious it is to see that God has promised to thrust out the enemy from before us. This He does sometimes by providence. Providence often removes enemies that would have been more than a match for us. When the children of Israel came to the Promised Land, they found that the population had been thinned; God had sent the hornet before them. It was a land, as the spies said, that did eat up the inhabitants thereof; God had sent a hornet and a pestilence to clear off the hosts of Canaan. You do not know, brothers and sisters, how strangely God, by a very evident providence, clears away temptations from before you, temptations which you might not have been strong enough to resist; you may be losing today something which will cause you grief for the present, which, if you had kept it, would have been your destruction in three years to come. The hornet has come and driven away your present comfort— really taking away from you a future curse. Now, whatever your enemies or your difficulties may be, God is on your side, and He will thrust them all away before you. It is a grand thing to go straight on in the path of duty, believing that God will clear the road, like the priests, when they came to the edge of Jordan, and saw the billows rolling up, yet on they went, and not so much as one of them was touched by the waves, for as they put down their feet,

the waters receded. Oh, it must have been grand to be the first man in that march, to see the waters flow away before your feet! So shall it be with you; the water shall come up to where you are, yet it shall not touch you, you shall find it disappear as you by faith advance. If you are called to march through floods and flames, they shall not hurt you, but shall work your lasting good, and expedite you on your journey towards the promised inheritance.

God has promised, then, by His providence to thrust out your enemies. He will also do it by His grace. His Holy Spirit will give you divine power by which every uprising sin shall be put down. If all the devils in hell should tempt you at one time, and all the lusts of the flesh should rise against you in one moment, and all the pride of life should assail you at the same instant, yet the eternal God, the Comforter, would be able to put them all back, and to deliver you, and to put a new song into your mouth as He gave you deliverance. Therefore, go on, brothers and sisters, even through the valley of the shadow of death, for God will thrust aside your foes, and make a pathway for you. But not without *your fighting* will you win the victory, for He will say, "Destroy them!" You are not to be taken to heaven as though you were a corpse carried there on a litter; you are to struggle according to the struggling of the Spirit within you. You shall work because He works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. Sins too difficult for you today, shall be destroyed tomorrow. You shall not merely escape from them, but you shall kill them. There are the eggs of the old serpent within your heart, and they continue to be hatched one after another, but you shall one day drive out the old dragon and all his hellish crew; your heart shall be pure and holy—as pure as heaven, and as holy as Christ Himself!

Thus much, then, with regard to God's people in the future—you and I can take comfort from the precious promise here contained.

IV. And now, lastly. Moses sang of **ISRAEL'S BLESSEDNESS**.

Israel is to be blessed in three ways: First, "Israel then shall dwell in safety." brothers and sisters, notwithstanding all our fights and our struggles, by virtue of our salvation in Jesus, "We which have believed do enter into the rest," for Jesus *is* our peace and our rest. Now see our privilege—we dwell alone; we have no alliance with the world; we stay not in Egypt; we rest not upon Assyria. God alone is our comfort and our confidence, and we dwell in safety. Dwelling with God in communion, having with Him one objective, one affection, one desire, we dwell apart from the rest of mankind, coming out daily more and more from them, and desiring to be nearer and nearer to Christ, and further and further from men. Here we dwell safely; there is nowhere safe except when alone with God, but always safe then. I would roll this precious morsel under my tongue, "Israel then shall dwell in safety." Like a sparrow, weak and defenseless, and on the housetop alone, but still in safety; hunted by Satan, molested by inward corruptions, tempted by the world, slandered by cruel tongues, but in the bosom of Jesus Christ like a dove, alone, always secure! Perish? That you shall not! Be destroyed by the adversary? It must not be! In time and in eternity God's honor is pledged for your salvation; earth's old pillars may bow, but the promises of God must stand fast! Safe you are, and safe you shall be when the world is on a blaze. What a mine of comfort in two or three words! "Israel then shall dwell in safety." It does not promise that you shall dwell in *wealth*, nor in *fame*, nor in *respectability*, nor even in *moderate* comfort, but you shall "dwell in safety." You may have to lie upon the sick bed, bedridden year after year;

you may be exiled from your native country; you may be among the poorest and most despised of mankind, but you shall surely dwell in safety! Where God guarantees safety, there is safety. All the princes of this world cannot make that man safe against whom God aims His arrow, but all the devils in hell cannot wound that man over whom the everlasting shield is uplifted to keep him secure—"He shall dwell in safety."

Come, brothers and sisters, let us take our harps from the willows, and begin a tune of quiet joy, for we are safe! Ah, poor world, you know nothing about this. The legalist, standing upon Sinai's mountain, has done much, but he has more to do; he knows he is not safe—he is to be saved by his own good works, he says, and he never thinks that his good works are not sufficient, therefore he is never safe; but *we* are safe, sinners as we are, for our righteousness is finished, it is the righteousness of Jesus; our standing is secure, for we are accepted in the Beloved. Blessed safety! This is what Roman Catholicism could never promise; serve her faithfully, and she offers you but a place in "purgatory" as your reward; but we who have believed, have Christ today, and are safe today and safe forever—

"Happier, but not more secure
Are the glorified spirits in heaven."

Oh, it is blessed, going to sleep with this satisfaction, "If I never wake in this world, I shall wake in heaven." And it is blessed, living in this world, on land and on sea, in the midst of storm or of plague, when one is sure that neither life nor death shall affect our safety. Having confided in God, as He manifests Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, our everlasting safety is secured by the promised oath, the covenant of the everlasting God.

The next blessing which is given to Israel is abundant provision. "The fountain of Jacob, alone, in a land of grain and new wine." God's people are to be supplied from a fountain, and around that fountain there shall always be abundance of grain for their necessities, and of new wine for their comfort and their luxury. Those who come to God receive no stinted allowance; they are gentlemen commoners upon the bounty of God. There is a daily portion allotted to them, and it is measured on a princely scale, equal to the dignity of the new birth. We drink from an ever-overflowing fountain. Other men get a little stock of goodness, and comfort, as they think, and they are pleased; but these things dry up and are gone; but the believer has no personal dependence whatever, he has everything in Christ—Christ is his fullness, and it pleases the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell. The believer comes to Jesus as to a fountain always bubbling up with waters fresh and sweet. The believer's provision is of all kinds, to meet his necessities, and to meet his more luxurious desires. Beloved, we are not only saved from hell— that is like the corn, but we are made meet for heaven—that is the wine. We are not merely saved day by day from our besetting sins—that is as the corn, but we are made to have enjoyments, high enjoyments, and fellowship with Jesus, the sitting in the heavenly places with Him—this is the wine. Believe me, brothers and sisters, all that your souls can need, when your desires are stretched to the utmost, you will find in Christ Jesus! If you have learned to trust Him, you may make your capacities of intellect as large as those of a Locke or Sir Isaac Newton; you may have a mind which knows no limit, which, like the horse-leech, cries, "Give, give!" It may be as expansive as the all-embracing sky, but in your God, you shall find all and more than all, for you shall be in your God as the fish that is in the sea, the bounds of which it cannot find, the limit of which it cannot learn—you shall be

satiated, filled, satisfied with an abundance from Him whose name is God all-sufficient. Nor shall you merely have enough for your needs—your joys shall be high, bright, and ecstatic. There shall be wine as well as corn. Believe me, we have our dancing days, our times of sacred merriment; there are seasons with us when we would not envy the angels the mirth they have, when our Jesus, the Bridegroom, puts the fasting days away, and gives us to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Oh, to know Him, to see Him, to feast upon Him is heaven below! The fountain of Jacob, then, is upon a land of corn and wine to us.

Lastly, God's people are furnished with another unspeakable blessing, namely, *celestial unction.* "His heavens shall also drop dew." How we need this! How dry we get, how dull, how dead, unless the Lord visits us! The Oriental knew the value of dew. When he saw the green pastures turn brown, and at last dry up till they were nothing but dust and powder, how he sought for the shower and the dew; and when it came, how thankful he was! When that dew of the Holy Spirit is gone from us, what dead prayers, what miserable songs, what wearisome preaching, what wretched hearing! Oh, there is death everywhere when the Holy Spirit is denied us; but we need not be without Him, for He is in the promise—"His heaven shall also drop dew." The words read as if there were much dew, superabundance of moisture. So, indeed, we may have the Holy Spirit most copiously if we have but faith enough to believe it, and earnestness enough to seek it. Would God we had such a dropping of dew today. If it has not come this morning, as I fear it has not, may it yet descend on your classes, and on your private meditations this afternoon! May you be favored with it this evening! O God, what are our services without Your Holy Spirit? It were better for us to be dumb than to speak without the Spirit of God. What is all the work the church attempts

without Your power, most blessed Holy Spirit? When we have You, then all is well—and You are promised, therefore come and glorify Yourself and glorify the Lord Jesus. Amen and Amen.

804 APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION – ACTS 3:19

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 5th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." — Acts 3:19

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Acts 3]

AFTER THE NOTABLE MIRACLE of healing the lame man, when the wondering people clustered round about Peter and John, they were not at all at a loss for a subject upon which to address them. Those holy men were full to the brim with the gospel, and therefore they had but to run over spontaneously, speaking of that topic which laid nearest to their hearts. To the Christian minister it should never be difficult to speak of Christ; and in whatever position he may be placed, he should never have to ask himself, "What is an appropriate subject for this people?" for the gospel is always in season, always appropriate, and if it is but spoken from the heart, it will be sure to work its way. Turning to the assembled multitude, Peter began at once to preach to them the gospel without a single second's hesitation. Oh, blessed readiness of a soul on fire with the Spirit! Lord, grant it to us evermore! Observe how earnestly Peter turns aside their attention from himself and his brother John to the Lord Jesus Christ. "Why look you so earnestly on *us*, as

though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" The object of the Christian minister should always be to withdraw attention from himself to his subject, so that it should not be said, "How well he spoke!" but, "Upon what weighty matters he treated!" They are priests of Baal, who, with their gaudy dresses, and their pretensions to a mysterious power, would have you look to themselves as the channels of divine grace, as though by their priestcraft, if not by their holiness, they could work miracles. But they are true messengers of God who continually say, "Look not on us as though we could do anything; the whole power to bless you lies in Jesus Christ, and in the gospel of His salvation."

It is noteworthy that Peter, in addressing this crowd, came at once to the very essence and heart of his message. He did not beat around the bush; he did not shoot his arrow far afield, but he hit the very center of the target. He preached not merely the gospel of good news, but Christ, the person of Christ; Christ crucified—crucified by them, Christ risen, Christ glorified of His Father. Depend upon it, this is the very strength of the Christian ministry, when it is saturated with the name and person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Christ away, and you ungospelize the gospel, you but pour out husks such as swine eat while the precious kernel is removed, seeing you have taken away the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If there was ever an occasion when a preacher of the gospel might have forgotten to speak of Christ, it was surely the occasion on which Peter spoke so boldly of Him, for might it not have been said, "Talk not of Jesus, they have just now nailed Him to death; the people are mad against Him; preach the truth of God, but do not mention *His* name. Deliver His doctrine, but withhold the mention of His person, for you will excite them to madness; you will put your own life in jeopardy; you will scarcely do good while they are so prejudiced, and you may do much mischief"?

But, instead of this, let them rage as they would, Peter would tell them about Jesus Christ, and about nothing else but Jesus Christ. He knew this to be the power of God unto salvation, and he would not flinch from it, so to them, even to them, he delivered the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with pungency as well as simplicity scarcely to be rivaled. Notice how he puts it: *"You"* have slain Him; *"you"* have crucified Him; *"you"* have preferred a murderer. Peter is not afraid of being personal; he does not shirk the touching of men's consciences; he rather thrusts his hand into their hearts, and makes them feel their sin; he labors to open a window into the darkness of their spirits, to let the light of the Holy Spirit shine into their souls. Even thus, my brothers, when we preach the gospel, must we do; affectionately but graciously we must deal with men; far from us to be trimming and mincing matters. Accursed let him be who takes away from the gospel of Jesus Christ that he may win popular applause, or who bates his breath and smoothes his tongue that he may please the unholy throng. Such a man may have for a moment the approbation of fools, but, as the Lord his God lives, he shall be set as a target for the arrows of vengeance in the day when the Lord comes to judge the nations. Peter, then, boldly and earnestly preached the gospel—preached the Christ of the gospel—preached it personally and directly at the crowd who were gathered around him.

Nor did Peter fail, when he had enunciated the gospel, to make the personal application by prescribing its peculiar commands. Grown up among us is a school of men who say that they rightly preach the gospel to sinners when they merely deliver statements of what the gospel is, and of the result of dying unsaved, but they grow furious and talk of unsoundness if any venture to say to the sinner, "Believe," or "Repent." To this school Peter did not belong; into their secret he had never come, and with their assembly, were he alive now, he would

not be joined. For, having first told his hearers of Christ, of His life, and death, and resurrection, he then proceeds to plunge the sword, as it were, up to the very hilt in their consciences by saying, "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." There, I say, in that promiscuous crowd, gathered together by curiosity, attracted by the miracle which he had worked, Peter felt no hesitation, and asked no question; he preached the same gospel as he would have preached to us today if he were here, and preached it in the most fervent and earnest style, preached the angles and the corners of it, and then preached the practical part of it, addressing himself with heart, and soul, and energy to everyone in that crowd, and saying, "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

Now there are four remarks which will make up the discourse of this morning, when they are enlarged.

I. And the first is this, that **THE APOSTLE BADE MEN REPENT AND BE CONVERTED**. Of this our text is proof enough without our going afield for other instances. Repent signifies, in its literal meaning, to change one's mind. It has been translated, "after-wit," or, "after-wisdom." It is the man's finding out that he was wrong, and rectifying his judgment; but although that is the meaning of the root, the word has come in Scriptural use to mean a great deal more. Perhaps there is no better definition of repentance than that which is given in our little children's hymnbook—

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved. Conversion, if translated, means a turning round, a turning from, and a turning to—a turning *from* sin, a turning to *holiness*—a turning from carelessness to thought, from the world to heaven, from self to Jesus—a complete turning. The word here used, though translated in the English, "Repent and be converted," is not so in the Greek; it is really, "Repent and convert," or, rather, "Repent and turn." It is an active verb, just as the other was. "Repent and turn." When the demoniac had the devils cast out of him—I may compare that to repentance; but when he put on his garments and was no longer naked and filthy, and was said to be clothed, and in his right mind, I may compare *that* to conversion. When the prodigal was feeding his swine, and all of a sudden began to consider and to come to himself, that was repentance. When he set out and left the far country, and went to his father's house that was conversion. Repentance is a part of conversion. It is, perhaps, I may say, the gate or door of it. It is that Jordan through which we pass when we turn from the desert of sin to seek the Canaan of conversion. Regeneration is the implanting of a new nature, and one of the earliest signs of that is a faith in Christ, and a repentance of sin, and a consequent conversion from that which is evil to that which is good.

The apostle Peter, addressing the crowd, said to them, "Change your minds; be sorry for what you have done; forsake your old ways; be turned; become new men." That was his message as I have now put it into other words.

Now, brothers and sisters, it has been said, and said most truly, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit of God. You do not need that I should stop to prove that

doctrine; we have preached it to you a thousand times, and we are prepared to prove that if anything is taught in Scripture, that is. There never was any genuine repentance in this world which was not the work of the Holy Spirit. For this purpose our Lord Jesus has gone on high: "He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." All true conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. You may rightly pray in the words of the prophet, "Turn us, and we shall be turned," for until God turns us, turn we never shall, and unless He converts us, our conversion is but a mistake. Hear it as a gospel summons—

"True belief and true repentance,
Every grace which brings us nigh;
Without money
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

"And yet," you say, "and yet the apostle Peter actually says to us, 'Repent, and be converted!' That is, you tell us with one breath that these things are the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then with the next breath you read the text, 'Repent, and be converted.'" Yes, I do, I do, and thank God I have learned to do so. But you will say, "How do you reconcile these two things?" I answer, it is no part of my commission to reconcile my Master's words—my commission is to preach the truth of God as I find it, to deliver it to you fresh from His hand; I not only *believe* these things to be agreeable to one another, but I think I see in which they do agree, but I utterly desire of making the most of what is written in Scripture, and to accept it all, whether I can see the agreement of the two sets of truths or not—to accept them both because they are both revealed. With this hand I hold as firmly as any man living, that repentance and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit, but I would sooner lose this hand, and both, than I would give up preaching

that it is the duty of men to repent and to believe, and the duty of Christian ministers to say to them, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." If men will not receive the truth of God till they understand it, there are many things which they will never receive. Yes, there are many facts, common facts in nature, which nobody would deny but a fool, which yet must be denied if we will not believe them till we understand them. There is a fish fresh taken from the sea—you take it to the cook to serve it on the table. You eat salt with it, do you? What for? You will have it dried and salted, but what for? Did not it always live in the salt sea? Why then is it not salt? It is as fresh as though it had lived in the purling brooks of the upland country—not a particle of salt about it, yet it has lived wholly in the salt sea! Do you understand that? No, you cannot. But there it is, a fresh fish in a salt sea!

And yonder are an ox and a sheep, and they are eating in the same meadow, feeding precisely on the same food. But the grass in one case turns to beef, in the other case to mutton, and on one animal there is hair and on the other wool. How is that? Do you understand it? So there may be two great truths in Scripture, which are both truths of God, and yet all the wise men in the world might be confused to bring those two truths together. I do not understand, I must confess, why Moses was told to cut down a tree and put it in the bitter waters of Marah. I cannot see any connection between a tree and the water, so that the tree should make it sweet, but yet I do believe that when Moses put the tree into the water the bitterness of Marah departed, and the stream was sweet. I do not know why it is that Elisha, when he went to Jericho, and found the water nauseous, said, "Bring me a cruse of salt." I do not know why his putting the salt into the stream should make it sweet—it looks to me as if it would operate the other way, but I believe the miracle, namely, that the salt was put in, and that it was

sweetened. So I do not understand how it is that my bidding impenitent sinners to repent should in any way be likely to make them do so, but I know it does—I see it every day. I do not know why a poor weak creature saying to his fellow men, "Believe," should lead them to believe, but it does so—and the Holy Spirit blesses it, and they do believe and are saved; and if we cannot see how, if we see the fact, we will be content and bless God for it! Perhaps you may be aware that an attempt has been made by ingenious expositors to get rid of the force of this text. Some of our Hyper-Calvinist friends, who are so earnest against anything like exhortations and invitations, have tried by some means to disembowel this text if they could; they have tried to take something out, and put something else in—they have said that the repentance to which men are here exhorted is but an outward repentance. But how is it so, when it is added, "Repent and be converted, *that your sins may be blotted out"?* Does a merely outward repentance bring with it the blotting out of sin? Assuredly not! The repentance to which men are here exhorted is a repentance which brings with it complete pardon—"that your sins may be blotted out." And, moreover, it seems to me to be a shocking thing to suppose that Peter and John went about preaching up a hollow, outward repentance which would not save men. My brothers who make that remark would themselves be ashamed to preach up outward repentance; I am sure they would think they were not ministers of God at all if they preached up any merely outward virtue; it shows to what shifts they must be driven when they twist the Scriptures so horribly with so little reason.

Brothers and sisters, it was a soul-saving repentance, and nothing less than that, which Peter commanded of these men. Now, let us come to the point. We tell men to repent and believe, not because we rely on any power in *them* to do so, for we know them to be dead in trespasses and sins; not because

we depend upon any power in our earnestness or in our speech to make them do so, for we understand that our preaching is less than nothing apart from God, but because the gospel is the mysterious engine by which God converts the hearts of men, and we find that, if we speak in faith, God the Holy Spirit operates with us, and while we bid the dry bones live, the Spirit makes them live—while we tell the lame man to stand on his feet, the mysterious energy of the Holy Spirit makes his ankle bones to receive strength—while we tell the impotent man to stretch out his hand, a divine power goes with the command, and the hand is stretched out, and the man is restored. The power lies not in the sinner, not in the preacher, but in the Holy Spirit, which works effectually with the gospel by divine decree, so that where the truth of God is preached, the elect of God are quickened by it, souls are saved, and God is glorified. Go on, my dear brothers, preaching the gospel boldly, and be not afraid of the result, for, however little may be your strength, and though your eloquence may be as nothing, yet God has promised to make His gospel the power to save, and so it shall be down to the world's end.

See then, you who are unsaved, before I leave this point, see what it is we are bound to require of *you* this morning. It is that you repent *and be* converted. We are not satisfied with having your ear, nor your eyes; we are not content with having you gathered in the house of worship—it is all in vain that you have come here unless you repent and be converted. We have not come to tell you that you must reform a little, and mend your ways in some degree—unless you put your trust in Christ, forsake your old way of life, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, you will perish. This—nothing short of this— is the gospel requirement. No church-going, no chapel-going will save you; no bowing of the knee, no outward form of worship, no pretensions and professions to godliness—you MUST

repent of your sins and forsake them, and if you don't do this, neither shall your sins be blotted out! Thus much, then, on the first point—the apostle commanded men to repent and be converted.

II. In the second place, **THERE WAS GOOD REASON FOR THIS COMMAND**.

The text says, "Repent you *therefore."* The apostle was logical—he had a reason for his exhortation. It was not mere declamation but sound reasoning. "Repent you therefore." What, then, was the argument? Why, first, because you, like the Jews, have put Jesus Christ to death! This was literally true of the people to whom he spoke—they had had a share in Christ's execution. And this is spiritually true of you to whom I speak this morning; every sin in the essence of it is a killing of God; do you understand me? Every time you do what God would not have you do, you do in effect, as far as you can, take God off of His throne, and disown the authority which belongs to His Godhead; you do in intent, as far as you can, kill God! That is the drift of sin—sin is a God-killing thing; every violation of the law of God is treason in its essence—it is rebellion against the lawgiver. When our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to the tree by sinners, sin only did then literally and openly what all sin really does in a spiritual sense. Do you understand me? Those offenses of yours which you have thought so little of, have been really a stabbing at the Deity. Will you not repent, if it is so? While you thought your sins to be mere trifles, light things to be laughed at, you would not repent; but now I have shown you (and I think your conscience will bear me out) that every sin is really an attempt to thrust God out of the world, and that every sin is saying, "Let there be no God." Oh, then there is cause enough to repent of it! Come here and reason with me, you who have broken God's law. Suppose the principle of your disobedience would be carried out to the fullest, would not all

laws be disregarded, and moral government subverted? And why not, since what one may do, another has clearly the same right to do. What, then, if the authority of God should be no more acknowledged in the universe—where should we all be? What a hell above ground would this world become! What a moral chaos and den of beasts! Do you not see what a mischievous thing, then, your iniquity has been? Repent and turn from it. If you can really believe this morning that though you did not nail Christ to the cross, nor plait the crown of thorns, and put it on His head, nor stand and mock Him there, yet that every sin is a real crucifixion of Christ, and a mockery of Christ, and a slaughter of Christ, then, truly, there is abundant reason why you should repent and turn from it!

The apostle also used another argument, namely, that He whom they had slain was a most blessed person—one so blessed that God the Father had exalted Him. Jesus Christ came not into this world with any selfish motive, but entirely out of philanthropy, full of love to men. And yet men put Him to death! Every sin is an insult against the good and kind God; God does not deserve that we should rebel against Him; if He were a great tyrant domineering over us, putting us to misery, there might be some excuse for our sin, but when He acts like a tender father to us, supplying our needs day by day, and forgiving our offenses, it is a shame, a cruel shame, that we should live in daily revolt against Him. You who have not believed in Christ, have mighty cause for repenting that you have not believed in Him, seeing He is so good and kind. What hurt has He ever done you that you should curse at Him? What injury has Jesus done to any one of you that you should despise Him? You deny His Deity, perhaps, or, at any rate, you despise the great salvation which He came into this world to work out. Does He deserve this of you? Prince of life and glory, King of angels, the adored of seraphs, are You despised of men for

whom Your blood was shed? Oh, what an accursed thing, then, sin must be, since it treats so badly so kind and blessed a person! This ought to make us melt! This should make us shed drops of pity and of grief! We ought, indeed, to turn from our idle and evil ways when against Jesus we have so offended.

Moreover, Peter used another plea, that while they had rejected the blessed Christ, they had chosen a murderer. Sinner, you have despised Christ, and what is it you have chosen? Has it been the drunkard's cup? Oh, what a bestial thing to prefer to Christ! Or has it been your lust? What a devilish thing to set in the place of Christ! Man, what have your sins done to you that you should prefer them to Jesus Christ? Have you lived in them for years? Then what wages have you had? What profit have you had? Tell me now, you who have gone the farthest in sin, tell me now, are you satisfied with the service? Would you wish to go over again the days you have lived, and to reap in your own bodies the fruit of your misdeeds? No, and you serve a hard master—a murderer from the beginning is that devil to whom you surrendered your lives. Oh, then, this is a thing to be repented of—that you have cast Christ away, and have chosen a murderer! "Not this man," you say, "but Barabbas." You will take this murderous world, this killing sin, but the blessed Savior, you let Him go! Is not there good argument here for repentance and conversion? Surely there is.

Peter clenches his reasoning with another argument, bringing down, if I may so say, the big hammer this time upon the head of the nail. It is this, that the Lord Christ, whom you have up to now despised, is able to do great things for you. "His name through faith in His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know." Christ then, by faith in Him, is able to do for you all that you need; if you will trust Jesus today, all your iniquities shall be blotted out; the past shall not be remembered; the present shall be rendered safe, and the future

blessed. If you trust in Christ, there is no sin which He will not forgive you, no evil habit the power of which He will not break, no foul propensity the weight of which He cannot remove; believing in Him, He can make you blessed beyond a dream. And is not this cause for repentance, that you should have slighted one who can do you so much good? With hands loaded with love, He stands outside the door of your heart! Is not this good reason for opening the door, and letting the heavenly stranger in, when He can bless you to such a vast extent of benediction? What, will you reject your own mercies? Will you despise the heaven which shall be yours if you will have my Master? Will you choose the doom from which none but He can rescue you, and let go the glory to which none but He can admit you? When I think of the usefulness of Christ to perishing sinners, there is indeed abundant cause for repentance that you should not have closed with Him long ago, and accepted Him to be your all in all. Thus you see the apostle argued with them by that word, "Therefore."

There was one other plea which he used, which I would employ this morning. He said, "Brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it." As if he would say, "Now that you have more of the light of God, repent of what you did in the dark." So might I say to some here present. You had not heard the gospel, you did not know that sin was so bad a thing; you did not understand that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost them who came unto God by Him. Well, now you do understand it; the times of your ignorance God winks at, but now, "commands all men everywhere to repent." Greater light brings greater responsibility. Do not go back to your sin, lest it become tenfold sin to you; if you do in the light of God what once you did in the darkness, He who winked at you when you knew no better, may lift His hand and swear that you shall never enter into His rest, because you sinned presumptuously,

and did despite to the Spirit of His divine grace. I charge every unconverted man and woman here to mind what they do in the future. If you did not know that Jesus was able to save you before, you know it now! If you were in the dark till this morning, you are not in the dark any longer! "Now you have no cloak for your sin." Therefore, because the cloak is pulled away, and you sin against the light of God, I say as Peter did, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

III. But now, our third remark shall be given with brevity, and it is this, **THAT WITHOUT REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION, SIN CANNOT BE PARDONED**.

The expression used in the text, "blotted out," in the original may be better explained in this way. Many Oriental merchants kept their accounts on little tablets of wax. On these tablets of wax, they indented marks which recorded the debts, and when these debts were paid, they took the blunt end of the stylus or pencil, and just flattened down the wax, and the account entirely disappeared. That was the form of "blotting out" in those days. Now, he who repents and is pardoned is, through the precious blood of Christ, so entirely forgiven that there is no record of his sin left. It is as though the stylus had leveled the marks in the wax, and there was no record left. What a beautiful picture of the forgiveness of sin! It is all gone, not a trace left! If we blot out an account from our books, there is the blot—the record is gone but there is the blot; but on the wax tablet there was no blot—it was all gone and the wax was smooth. So is it with the sin of God's people when removed by Jesus' blood—it is all gone and gone forever. But rest assured it cannot be removed unless there is repentance and conversion as the result of faith in Jesus. This must be so, for this is most seemly. Would you expect a great king to forgive an erring courtier unless the offender first confessed his fault? Where is the honor and dignity of the throne of God if men are to be

pardoned while as yet they will not confess their sin? In the next place, it would not be moral—it would be pulling up the very sluices of immorality to tell men that they could be pardoned while they went on in their sins and loved them. What, a thief pardoned, and continues to steal! A harlot forgiven, and remains unchaste! The drunkard forgiven, and yet delights in his tankards! Truly, then, the gospel would be the servant of unrighteousness, and against us who preach it morality would make a law. But it is not so, impenitent sinners shall be damned, let them boast what they will about divine grace. My hearer, you must hate your sin or God will hate you! You must turn or burn! You cannot have your sins and go to heaven. Which shall it be? Will you leave your sins and go to heaven, or hold your sins and go to hell? Which shall it be, for it must be one or the other; there must be a divorce between us and sin, or there cannot be a marriage between us and Christ. Does not conscience tell us this? There is not a conscience here that will say to a man, "You can hope to be saved, and yet live as you like." Some have said this—I question if any have believed it. No, no, no, blind as conscience is, and though its voice is often very feeble, yet there is enough of sight about conscience to see that continuance in sin and pardon cannot coexist, and there must be a forsaking of iniquity if there is to be a forgiving of it. But, my hearer, whether your conscience shall say so or not, God says it; "He who confesses and forsakes his sin shall find mercy," but there is no promise for the unrepentant. God declares that he who repents shall be forgiven. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."

But for haughty Pharaoh, who says, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" there is nothing but eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord. He who goes on in his iniquity, and hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that

without remedy. Ah, I have no pardons to preach to you who settle your minds to continue in sin; I have no gentle notes of love at all, nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. But ah, if you loathe your sins—if God's Holy Spirit has made you hate your past lives, if you are anxious to be made new men in Christ Jesus, I have nothing but notes of love for you. Believe in Jesus, cast yourself on Him, for He has said, "He who comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The door is shut and fast bolted to every man who will keep his sin, but it is wide open, even to the biggest sinner out of hell, if he will leave his sin and lay hold of Jesus and put his trust in Him!

IV. The last remark is this—**REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION WILL BE REGARDED AS PECULIARLY PRECIOUS IN THE FUTURE**, for my text says, "That your sins may be blotted out, *when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."*

A very difficult passage, indeed! Its meaning is scarcely known. Three or four meanings have been attached to it. In the first place, I think it means this—he who repents and is converted, shall enjoy the blotting out of sin in that season of sweet peace which always follows pardon. After a man has been thoroughly broken down on account of sin, God deals with him very tenderly. Among the very happiest parts of human life are the hours immediately after conversion! You know how we sing—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?"

When the broken bone begins to heal, David puts it, "You make the bones which You have broken to rejoice." When the

prisoner first gets out of prison; when the fetters for the first time clank music as they fall broken to the ground; when the sick man leaves the sick chamber of his convictions to breathe the air of liberty, and to feel the health of a pardoned sinner! Oh, if you did but know what a bliss it is to be forgiven, you would never stay away from Christ! But you do not know, and cannot tell how sweet it is to be washed in the precious blood, and wrapped about with the fair white linen, and to have the kiss of the heavenly Father on your cheek! O "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Perhaps these "times of refreshing" may also relate to times of revival in the Christian church. The only way in which you, dear friends, can share in the refreshment of a revival, is by your own repenting and being converted. A revival is great refreshment to the church; I pray that a mighty wave may sweep over Great Britain, for much we need it. But of what use is a revival to an unpardoned sinner? It is like the soft south wind blowing upon a corpse—it can bring no genial warmth. If you repent, and are converted, then, amidst the general joy of the revival, you shall have this joy that your sins have been blotted out. What a mournful cry is that, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" I think I hear that cry from some in the Tabernacle this morning. Oh, that blessed month of February and the beginning of March! It was to us like a harvest and a summer! What prayers, what tears, what cries! How full this house was to pray! How all day long from before the daystar shone, until long after sunset we continued in prayer! But you are still not saved, some of you. The harvest and the summer is ended, and you are not saved! Ah, I have been praying to God that you may yet be saved now. I am unable to achieve a purpose which has been hot upon my heart—to go and preach to a greater congregation in the

Agricultural Hall during the next month. I find myself restrained by the Master's hand. Ill health has returned to me, and most probably there are months of weariness and pain awaiting me, but I have prayed that if I may not cast the net in the greater place, I may have the more of you *here*. We cannot have a larger congregation, but I would gladly have more conversions. It is hard preaching, it is dull working, unless there are results. We must have conversions. As that woman of old said, "Give me children or I die," so is it with the preacher—he must have sinners saved, or he prays to die! Dear hearer, if these times of refreshing may come, our prayer is that you may repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and so may partake to the full in the priceless blessings of the season.

Once more, the text means, according to the context, the Second Advent. Jesus is yet to come a second time, and like a mighty shower flooding a desert shall His coming be. His church shall revive and be refreshed; she shall once again lift up her head from her lethargy, and her body from her sepulcher; but woe unto you who are not saved when Christ comes, for the Day of the Lord will be darkness and not light to you! When Christ comes to the unconverted, "the day shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yes, and all who do wickedly, shall be stubble." "But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi." Oh, if you repent and are converted, you shall stand fully absolved in the day of His coming, when heaven and earth will reel, when the solid rock begins to melt, and the stars, like withered fig leaves, fall from the tree, when the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long, "Awake, you dead and come to judgment," when the grand assize is sitting, and the Judge shall be there—the Judge

of the quick and the dead, to separate the righteous from the wicked. The Lord have mercy upon you in that day, and so He shall if His grace shall make you obedient to the words of our text, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

805 RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST – EPH. 2:4-5

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 12th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved)." — Ephesians 2:4-5

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Ephesians 2]

THERE HAVE BEEN conferences of late of all sorts of people upon all kinds of subjects, but what a remarkable thing a conference would be if it were possible for persons who have been raised from the dead! If you could somehow or other get together the daughter of the Shunammite, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow at the gates of Nain, Lazarus, and Eutychus, what strange communing they might have with one another! What singular inquiries they might make, and what remarkable disclosures might they present to us. The thing is not possible, and yet a better and more remarkable assembly may be readily gathered on the same conditions, and more important information may be obtained from the confessions of its members. This morning we have a conference of that very character gathered in this house, for many of us were dead in trespasses and sins, even as others—but we hope that through divine energy we have been quickened from that spiritual death, and are now living to praise God. It will be well

for us to talk together, to review the past, to rejoice in the present, to look forward to the future. "You has He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." And as you sit together, an assembly of men and women possessed of resurrection life, you are a more notable conclave than if merely your bodies and not your spirits had been quickened.

The first part of this morning's discourse will be occupied with *a solemnity in which we shall take you into the morgue;* secondly, we shall spend awhile in *reviewing a miracle, and we shall observe dead men living;* we shall then turn aside to observe *a sympathy indicated in the text;* and we shall close with a song, for the text reads somewhat like music—it is full of thankfulness, and thankfulness is the essence of true song; it is full of holy and adoring wonder; it is evermore true poetry even though expressed in prose.

I. Celebrate first a great **SOLEMNITY**, and descend into the morgue of our poor humanity.

According to the teaching of sacred Scripture, men are dead, spiritually dead. Certain vain men would make it out that men are only a little disordered and bruised by the fall, wounded in a few delicate members, but not mortally injured. However, the Word of God is very explicit upon the matter, and declares our race to be not wounded, not merely hurt, but slain outright, and left as dead in trespasses and sin. There are those who fancy that fallen human nature is only in a sort of swoon or fainting fit, and only needs a process of reviving to set it right. You have only, by education and by other manipulations, to set its life-floods in motion, and to excite within it some degree of action, and then life will speedily be developed. There is much good in every man, they say, and you have only to bring it out by training and example. This fiction is exactly opposite to the teaching of sacred Scripture! Within these truthful pages we read of no fainting fit, no temporary

paralysis, but death is the name for nature's condition, and quickening is its great necessity. Man is not partly dead, like the half-drowned mariner in whom some spark of life may yet remain, if it is but fondly tendered, and wisely nurtured. There is not a spark of spiritual life left in man—manhood is to all spiritual things an absolute corpse. "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die," said God to our first parents, and die they did—a spiritual death; and all their children alike by nature lie in this spiritual death. It is not a sham death, or a metaphorical one, but a real, absolute, spiritual death. Yet it will be said, "Are they not alive?" Truly so, but not *spiritually*. There are grades of life. You come first upon the vegetable life; but the vegetable is a dead thing as to the vitality of the animal. Above the animal life rises the mental life, a vastly superior life; the creature, which is only an animal, is dead to either the joys or the sorrows of mental life. Then, high above the mental, as much as the mental is above the animal, rises what Scripture calls the spiritual life—the life in Christ Jesus. All men have more or less of the mental life, and it is well that they should cultivate it—get as much as they can of it, that they should put it to the best uses, and make it subserve the highest ends. Man, even looked upon as merely living mentally, is not to be despised or trifled with, but still, the mental life cannot of itself rise to the spiritual life, it cannot penetrate beyond that mystical wall which separates forever the mere life of mind from the life of that new principle, the Spirit, which is the offspring of God, and is the living and incorruptible seed which He casts into the soul. If you could conceive a man in all respects like yourselves with this one difference, that his soul had died out of him, that he only possessed his animal faculties, and had no intellectual faculties, so that he could breathe and walk, sleep and eat, and drink, and make a noise, but all mental power was gone—you would then speak of him as being entirely dead to mental

pursuits. He might be a most vigorous and well-developed animal, but his manhood would be dead. It would be of no use explaining a proposition to him, or working out a problem on the black board for his instruction, or offering him even the simplest school book, for if he had no mind to receive, how could you impart?

Now, spiritually, this is the condition of every unregenerate man. It is of no use whatever, apart from the Spirit of God, to hope to make the man understand spiritual things, for they are spiritually discerned, says the apostle. The carnal mind cannot understand the things which are of God—when best trained it has no glimmering of the inward sense of spiritual things; it stumbles over the letter, and loses the real meaning, not from lack of mental capacity, but from the absence of spiritual life. O sons of men, if you would know God, "You must be born-again." "Except a man is born-again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God." He cannot understand it, he cannot know it. The carnal man cannot understand the things which are of God, which are eternal and invisible, any more than an ox can understand astronomy, or a fish can admire the classics. Not in a moral sense, nor a mental sense, but in a spiritual sense, poor humanity is dead, and so the Word of God again and again most positively describes it.

Step with me, then, into the sepulcher, and what do you observe of yonder bodies which are slumbering there? They are quite unconscious. Whatever goes on around them, neither occasions them joy nor causes them grief. The dead in their graves may be marched over by triumphant armies, but they shout not with them who triumph. Or, friends they have left behind may sit there and water the grass upon the green mound with their tears, but no responsive sigh comes from the gloomy cavern of the tomb. It is thus with men spiritually dead—they are unaffected by spiritual things. A dying Savior, whose groans

might move the very stones, and make the rocks melt, the spiritually dead can hear all, but they are unmoved. Even the all-present Spirit is undiscerned by them, and His power unrecognized. Angels, holy men, godly exercises, devout aspirations—all these are beyond and above their world. The pangs of hell do not alarm them, and the joys of heaven do not entice them; they hear, after a sort, mentally, but the spirit-ear is fast shut up, and they do not hear; they are unconscious of all things which are of a spiritual character— they have eyes, but they see not, and ears, but they hear not. You can interest them in the facts of geology, or the discoveries of art, but you cannot win their hearts to spiritual emotions and pursuits, because they are as unaware of their meaning as an oyster or snail is unacquainted with the dis-establishment of the Irish church. Carnal men blunder over the first words of spiritual knowledge as Nicodemus did who, when he was told that he must be born-again, began to inquire, "How can a man be born again when he is old?" or, like the woman of Samaria, who, when she was told of living water, could not understand the spiritual truth, and exclaimed in wonder, "You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from where then have You that living water?" Men are spiritually unconscious of spiritual truth, and so far dead to it.

Observe that corpse: you may strike it, you may bruise it, but it will not cry out; you may pile burdens upon it, but it is not weary; you may shut it up in darkness, but it feels not the gloom. So the unconverted man is laden with the load of his sin, but he is not weary of it; he is shut up in the prison of God's justice, but he pants not for liberty; he is under the curse of God, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," but that curse causes no commotion in his spirit because he is dead. Well may some of you be peaceful, because

you are not aware of the terrors which surround you. A man totally deaf is not startled by thunder; if totally blind, he is not alarmed by the flashes of lightning, he fears not the tempest which he cannot see. Even thus is it with you who are at ease in your sins—you cannot discern the danger of your sin, you do not perceive the terror that rises out of it, else let me tell you there would be no sleep to those wanton eyes, no rest to those giddy spirits; you would cry out in grief the very moment you received life, nor would you rest till delivered from those evils which NOW guarantee for you a sure damnation. Oh, were you but alive, you would never be quiet till you were saved from the wrath to come! Man remains unconscious of spiritual things, and unmoved by them because, in a spiritual sense, he is dead.

Invite yonder corpse to assist you in the most necessary works of philanthropy; the pestilence is abroad—ask the buried one to kneel with you, and invoke the power of heaven to recall the direful messenger. Or, if he prefers it, ask him to assist you in purifying the air, and attending to sanitary arrangements; you ask in vain, however necessary or simple the act, he cannot help you in it, and in *spiritual* things, it is even so with the graceless. The carnal man can put himself into the posture of prayer, but he cannot pray; he can open his mouth, and make sweet sounds in earth-born music, but to true praise he is an utter stranger. Even repentance, that soft and gentle grace which ought to be natural to the sinful, is quite beyond his reach; how shall he repent of a sin, the weight of which he cannot feel? How shall he pray for a blessing, the value of which he has no power to perceive? How shall he praise a God in whom he feels no interest, and in whose existence he takes no delight? I say that to all spiritual things the man is quite as unable as the dead are unable to the natural works and services of daily life. "And yet," says one, "we heard you last Lord's Day tell these dead people to repent and be converted." I know you did, and you shall hear

me yet again do the same, but why do I speak to the dead thus, and tell them to perform actions which they cannot do? *Because my Master bids me*, and as I obey my Master's errand, a power goes forth with the word spoken and the dead awake in their sleep! They wake through the quickening power of the Holy Spirit—and they who *naturally* cannot repent and believe, *do* repent and believe in Jesus, and escape from their former sins and live. But, believe me, it is no power of *theirs* which makes them thus awake from their death-sleep, and no power of *mine* which arrests the guilty, slumbering conscience; it is a *divine* power which God has yoked with the word which He has given forth when it is fully and faithfully preached. Therefore have we exercised ourselves in our daily calling of bidding dead men live, because life comes at the divine bidding; but dead they are, most thoroughly so, and the longer we live, the more we feel it to be so, and the more closely we review our own condition before conversion, and the more studiously we look into our own condition even *now*, the more fully do we know that man is dead in sin, and life is a *gift*, a gift from heaven—a gift of undeserved love and sovereign grace, so that the living must every one of them praise God and not themselves.

One of the saddest reflections about poor dead human nature is what it will be; death in itself, though a solemn matter, is not as dreadful as that which comes of it. Many a time when that dear corpse has first been forsaken of the soul, those who have lost a dear one have been glad to imprint that cold brow with kisses; the countenance has looked even more lovely than in life, and when friends have taken the last glimpse, there has been nothing revolting, but much that was attractive. Our dead ones have smiled like sleeping angels, even when we were about to commit them to the grave. Ah, but we cannot shake from us a wretched sense of what is sure to be revealed before long. It is only a matter of time before corruption must set in, and it

must bring with it its daughter putridity, and by-and-by, the whole must be so noxious that if you had kept it above ground so long, you would vehemently cry with Abraham, "Bury my dead out of my sight!" for the natural and inevitable result of death is *corruption*. So it is with us all. Some are manifestly corrupt—ah, how soon, while yet they are youths, we see them plunging into infamous vice; they are corrupt in the tongue with lying words and lascivious speaking; they are corrupt in the eyes with wanton glances; corrupt, certainly at heart, and then corrupt thoroughly in life. There are many about us in the streets every day, the stink of whose corruption compels us to put them out of society, for we are very decent. Even those who are dead, themselves, are very scrupulous not to associate with those who are too far gone in corruption; the dead bury their dead, and roll the stone and put away the debauched and dissolute; we do not ask the rotten sinners into our households because they might corrupt us too fast, and we flatter ourselves that we are so much superior, whereas they are only a stage or two ahead in a race which all unregenerate men are running. This corruption, though not developed in all to the same extent *visibly*, will be plain enough at the last in another world. When God finds us dead, He will cast us out where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. What will be the development of an unregenerate character in hell, I cannot tell, but I am certain it will be something which my imagination dares not now attempt to depict, for all the restraints of this life which have kept men decent and moral will be gone when they come into the next world of sin! And as heaven is to be the perfection of the saint's holiness, so hell will be the perfection of the sinner's loathsomeness—and there will he discover, and others will discover what sin is when it comes to its worst. "When lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." And this, dear hearer, do we solemnly

remind you will be *your* portion forever and ever, unless God is pleased to quicken you! Unless you are made to live together with Christ, you will be in this world dead, perhaps in this world corrupt, but certainly so in the next world where all the dreadful influences of sin will be developed and discovered to the very fullest; and you shall be cast away from the presence of God and the glory of His power.

There can be no death in heaven, neither can corruption inherit incorruption, and if you have not been renewed in the spirit of your mind, within those pearly gates you can never have your portion, and where the light of heaven shines in perpetual noonday, your lot can never be cast. Weigh these thoughts, I pray you. If they are not according to this book, reject them! But as they most certainly are, refuse them at your own peril, but rather let them take possession of your careful spirit, and lead you to seek and find eternal life in Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. We now change the subject for something more pleasant, and observe **A MIRACLE**, *or dead men made alive!*

The great objective of the gospel of Christ is to create men anew in Christ Jesus; it aims at resurrection and accomplishes it. The gospel did not come into this world merely to restrain the passions, or educate the principles of men, but to infuse into them a *new life* which, as fallen men, they did not possess. I saw yesterday what seemed to me, a picture of those preachers whose sole end and aim is the *moralizing* of their hearers, but who have not learned the need of *supernatural* life. Not very far from the shore were a dozen or more boats at sea dragging for two dead bodies. They were using their lines and grappling irons, and what with hard rowing and industrious sailing, were doing their best most commendably to fish up the lost ones from the pitiless sea. I do not know if they were successful, but if so, what further could they do with them but decently

commit them to their mother earth? The process of education and everything else, apart from the Holy Spirit, is a dragging for dead men—to lay them out decently, side by side, in the order and decency of death, but nothing more can man do for man. The gospel of Jesus Christ has a far other and higher task; it does not deny the value of the moralist's efforts, or decry the results of education, but it asks what *more* can you do, and the response is, "Nothing." There it bids the bearers of the bier stand away and make room for Jesus, at whose voice the dead arise. The preacher of the gospel cannot be satisfied with what is done in drawing men out of the sea of outward sin; he longs to see the lost life restored; he desires to have breathed into them a new and superior life to what they have possessed before. Go your way, education, do your best, you are useful in your sphere; go your way, teacher of morality, do your best, you too are useful in your own manner, but if it comes to what man *really* needs for eternity, you all put together are of little worth—the gospel, and the gospel alone, answers men's requirements; man must be *regenerated*, *quickened*, made *anew*—have fresh breath from heaven breathed into him, or the work of saving him is not begun. The text tells us that God has done this for His people, for those who trust in Him. Let us observe the dry bones as they stir and stand before the Lord, and observing, let us praise the Lord, that according to His great love with which He loved us, He has quickened us together with Christ!

In this idea of *quickening*, there is a mystery; what is that invisible something which quickens a man? Who can unveil the secret? Who can track life to its hidden fountain? Brother, you are a living child of God—what made you live? You know that it was by the power of the *Holy Spirit*. In the language of the text, you trace it to *God;* you believe your new life to be of divine implantation; you are a believer in the supernatural, you believe that God has visited you as He has not visited other

men, and has breathed into you life. You believe rightly, but you cannot *explain* it; we know not of the wind, from where it comes or where it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. He who should sit down deliberately, and attempt to explain regeneration, and the source of it, might sit there till he grew into a marble statue before he would accomplish the task. The Holy Spirit enters into us, and we who were dead before to *spiritual* things, begin to live by His power and indwelling; He is the great worker, but *how* the Holy Spirit works is a secret that must be reserved for God Himself. We need not wish to understand the mode; it is enough for us if we partake of the result.

It is a great mystery, then, but while it is a mystery, it is a great *reality*. We know and do testify, and we have a right to be believed, for we trust we have not forfeited our characters; we know and testify that we are now possessors of a life which we knew nothing of some years ago, that we have come to exist in a new world, and that the appearance of all things outside of us is totally changed from what it used to be. "Old things have passed away, behold all things are become new." I bear witness that I am this day the subject of sorrows which were no sorrows to me before I knew the Lord, and that I am uplifted with joys which I should have laughed at the very thought of if anyone had whispered the name of them in my ears before the divine life had quickened me. This is the witness of hundreds of us, and although others disbelieve us, they have no right to deny our consciousness because they have not partaken of the same; if they have never tried it, what should they know about it? If there should be an assembly of blind men, and one of them should have his eyes opened, and begin to talk of what he saw, I can imagine the blind ones all saying, "What a fool that man is! There are no such things." "Here I have lived in this world 70 years," says one, "and I never saw that thing which he calls

a color, and I do not believe in his absurd nonsense about scarlet and violet, and black and white; it is all foolery!" Another wiseacre declares, "I have been up and down the world, and all over it for 40 years, and I declare I never had the remotest conception of blue or green, nor had my father before me; he was a right good soul, and always stood up for the grand old darkness. Give me," says he, "a good stick and a sensible dog, and all your nonsensical notions about stars, and suns, and moons, I leave to fools who like them." The *blind* man has not come into the world of light and color, and the *unregenerate* man has not come into that world of spirit, and hence neither of them is capable of judging correctly. I sat one day at a public dinner, opposite a gentleman of the gourmet species who seemed a man of vast knowledge as to wines, spirits, and all the viands of the table; he judged and criticized at such a rate, that I thought he ought to have been employed by our provision merchants as taster in general! He had finely developed lips, and he smacked them frequently; his palate was in a flue-critical condition; he was also as proficient in the quantity as in the quality, and disposed of meats and drinks in a most wholesale manner! His retreating forehead, empurpled nose, and protruding lips made him, while eating at least, more like an animal than a man. At last, hearing a little conversation around him upon religious matters, he opened his small eyes and his great mouth, and delivered himself of this sage utterance, "I have lived 60 years in this world, and I never felt or believed in anything spiritual in all my life." The speech was a needless diversion of his energies from the roast duck; we did not want him to tell us that; I, for one, was quite clear about it before he spoke—if the cat under the table had suddenly jumped on a chair and said the same thing, I would have attached as much importance to the utterance of the one as to the declaration of the other! And so, by one sin in one man, and another in

another man, they betray their spiritual death. Until a man has received the divine life, his remarks thereon, even if he is an archbishop, go for nothing. He knows nothing about it according to his own testimony; then why should he go on to try to beat down with sneers and sarcasms those who solemnly avow that they have such a life, and that this life has become real to them—so real that the mental life is made to sink into a subordinate condition compared with the *spiritual* life which reigns within the soul?

This life brings with it the exercise of renewed faculties. The man who begins to live unto God has powers now which he never had before—the power to really *pray*, the power to heartily *praise*, the power to actually *commune* with God, the power to *see* God, to *talk* with God, the power to receive tidings from the invisible world, and the power to send messages up through the veil which hides the unseen up to the very throne of God! Now the spiritual man, instead of asking "Is there a God?" feels that there is not a place where God is not! He sees God in everything! He hears Him in the wind, discerns Him in every creature that surrounds him! Now the man, instead of dreading God, and taking himself to some outward form, ceremony, or other outward way of pushing God further off, puts away his ceremonies, casts away the beggarly elements which once might have pleased him, and draws near to his God in *spirit*, and speaks with him. "Father," he says, and God acknowledges the kindred. I wish we all possessed this life, and I pray if we have it not, that God may send it to us; if we have it not the testimony of the Word of God is that we are dead when most we seem to be alive.

I shall not, however, keep you longer upon this quickening except to say that you may easily image to yourself the inward experience of a man who receives new life from the dead. You may conceive it by the following picture; suppose a man to have

been dead, and to have been buried like others in some great necropolis, some city of the dead, in the catacombs. An angel visits him, and by mercy's touch he lives! Now, can you conceive that man's first emotion when he begins to breathe? There he is in the coffin, he feels stifled, pent up; he had been there 20 years, but he never felt inconvenienced until now; he was easy enough, in his narrow cell, if ease can be where life is not. The moment he lives he feels a horrible sense of suffocation—life will not endure to be so hideously compressed, and he begins to struggle for release. He lifts with all his might that dreadful coffin lid! What a relief when the decaying plank yields to his pressure! So the ungodly man is content enough in his sin, his Sabbath-breaking, his covetousness, his worldliness—but the moment God quickens him, his sin is as a sepulcher to the living; he feels unutterably wretched; he is not in a congenial position, and he struggles to escape. Often at the first effort the great black lid of blasphemy flies off, never to be replaced. Satan thought it was screwed down fast enough, and so it was for a *dead man*, but *life* makes short work of it, and many other iniquities follow. But to return to our resurrection in the vault—the man gasps a minute, and feels refreshed with such air as the catacomb affords him; but soon he has a sense of clammy dampness about him, and feels faint and ready to expire; so the renewed man at first feels little but his inability, and groans after power; he cries, "I want to repent! I want to believe in Jesus! I want to be saved!" Poor wretch! He never felt that before—of course he did not—he was dead! Now he is alive, and therefore he longs for the tokens, signs, fruits, and refreshments of *life*. Do you not see our poor friend who has newly risen? He has slipped down from that niche in the wall where they laid him, and finding himself in a dark vault, he rubs his eyes to know whether he really is alive, or whether it is all a dream! It is such a new thing, and as by the

little glimmering of light that comes in, he detects hundreds of others lying in the last sleep, and he says to himself, "Great God; what a horrible place for a living man to be; can I be alive?"

He begins to wander about, searching for a door by which he may escape; he loathes those winding-sheets in which they wrapped him; he begins stripping them off. They are damp and mildewed, they do not suit a living man. Soon he cries out for help—perhaps there is some passerby who may hear him, and he may be delivered from his confinement. So a man who has been renewed by divine grace, when he partly discovers where he is, cries out, "This is no place for me!" That giddy ballroom, why, it was well enough for one who knew no better; that ale-bench was suitable for an unregenerate soul, but what can an heir of heaven do in such places? Lord, deliver me! Give me light and liberty! Bring my soul out of prison that I may live and praise Your name! The man pines for liberty, and if at last he stumbles to the door of the vault, and reaches the open air, I think he drinks deep draughts of the blessed oxygen! How glad he is to look upon the green fields, and the fresh flowers; you do not imagine that he will wish to return to the vaults again, do you? He will utterly forsake those gloomy abodes; he shudders at the remembrance of the past, and would not for the entire world undergo again what he has once passed through. He is tenderly affected at every remembrance of the past, and is especially fearful lest there should be others like himself, newly quickened, who may need a Brother's hand to set them at liberty; he loathes the place where once he slept so quietly. So the converted man dreads the thought of going back to the joys which once so thoroughly fascinated him. "No," he says, "they are no joys to me; they were joys well enough for my old state of existence, but now, having entered into a new life, a new world, they are no more joys to me than the spade

and shroud are joys to a living man, and I can only think of them with grief, and of my deliverance with gratitude.

III. I must pass on very briefly to the third point. The text indicates **SYMPATHY**—*"He has quickened us together with Christ."* What does that mean? It means that the life which lives in a saved man is the same life which dwells in Christ! To put it simply, when Elisha had been buried for some years, we read that they threw a dead man into the tomb where the bones of Elisha were, and no sooner did the corpse touch the prophet's bones than it lived at once! Yonder is the cross of Christ, and no sooner does the soul touch the crucified Savior than it lives at once, for the Father has given to Him to have life in Himself, and life to communicate to others. Whoever trusts Christ has touched Him, and by touching Him he has received the virtue of eternal life; to trust in the Savior of the world is to be quickened through Him.

We are quickened together with Christ in three senses—first, *representatively*. Christ represents us before the eternal throne. He is the Second Adam to His people; as long as the First Adam lived, the race lived, and as long as the Second Adam lives, the race represented by Him lives before God. Christ is accepted, believers are accepted, Christ is justified, the saints are justified, Christ lives, and the saints enjoy a life which is hid with Christ in God.

Next we live *by union with Christ.* As long as the head is alive the members have life. Unless a member can be severed from the head, and the body maimed, it must live as long as there is life in the head. So long as Jesus lives, every soul that is vitally united to Him, and is a member of His body, lives according to our Lord's own word, "Because I live you shall live also." Poor Martha was much surprised that Christ should raise her brother from the dead, but He said, as if to surprise her still more, "Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die; do you

believe this?" This is one of the things we are to believe—that when we have received the spiritual life it is in union with the life of Christ; and consequently can never die! Because Christ lives, our life must abide in us forever.

Then we also live together with Christ as to *likeness*. We are quickened together with Christ, that is, in the same *manner*. Now Christ's quickening was in this wise—He was dead through the law, but the law has no more dominion over Him now that He lives again. So you, Christian, you are cursed by the old law of Sinai, but it has no power to curse you *now*, for you are risen in Christ; you are not under the law, its terrors and threats have nothing to do with you. Of our Lord it is written, "In that He lives," it is said, "He lives unto God." Christ's life is a life unto God! Such is yours. You are not, therefore, to live unto the flesh, or to mind the things of it, but God, who gave you life, is to be the great object of your life. *In* Him you live, and *for* Him you live. Moreover, it is said, "Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him." In that same way the Christian lives; he shall never go back to his spiritual death; having once received divine life, he shall never lose it. God plays not fast and loose with His chosen; He does not save today, and damn tomorrow; He does not quicken us with the inward life, and then leave us to perish; divine grace is a living, incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever. "The water that I shall give him," says Jesus, "shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." glory be to God, then, you who live by faith in Christ live an immortal life, a life dedicated to God, a life of deliverance from the bondage of the law! Rejoice in it, and give your God all the praise!

IV. And this brings us to the last word, which was **A SONG**.

We have not time to sing it; we will just write the score before your eyes, and ask you to sing it at your leisure—your

hearts making melody to God. Brothers and sisters, if you have indeed been thus made alive as others are not, you have first of all, in the language of the text, to praise the great love of God, great beyond all precedent! It was *love* which made Him breathe into Adam the breath of life, and make poor clay to walk and speak. But it is far greater love which makes Him now, after the fall has defiled us, renew us with a second and yet higher life. He might have made new creatures by millions out of nothing; He had but to speak, and angels would have thronged the air, or, beings like ourselves, only pure and unfallen, would have been multiplied by myriads upon the greensward. If He had left us to sink to hell as fallen angels had done before us, who could have impugned His justice? But His great love would not let Him leave His elect to perish; He loved His people, and therefore He would cause them to be born-again. His great love with which He loved us defied death, and hell, and sin. Dwell on the theme, you who have partaken of this love! He loved *us;* the most unworthy who had no right to such love; there was nothing in us to love, and yet He loved us, loved us when we were dead. Here His great love seems to swell and rise to mountainous dimensions; love to miserable sinners, love to loathsome sinners; love to the dead and to the corrupt. Oh, heights and depths of sovereign grace, where are the notes which can sufficiently sound forth your praise? Sing, O you redeemed, of His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in sins!

And cease not to praise God as you think of the riches of His mercy, for we are told that He is rich in mercy, rich in His nature as to mercy, rich in His covenant as to treasured mercy, rich in the person of His dear Son as to purchased mercy, rich in providential mercy—but richest of all in the mercy which saves the soul. Friends, explore the mines of Jehovah's wealth if you can; take the key and open the granaries of your God,

and see the stores of love which He has laid up for you; strike your sweetest notes to the praise of God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He has loved us!

And let the last note, and the highest and the loudest of your song be that with which the text concludes, "By grace are you saved." O never stammer there! Brothers and sisters, whatever you do or do not hold—never be slow to say this, "If saved at all, I am saved by grace, grace in contradistinction to human merit, for I have no merit; grace in contradistinction to my own free will, for my own free will would have led me further and further from God; preventing grace brought me near to Him." Do bless and magnify the grace of God, and as you owe all to it, cry, "Perish each thought of pride!" Consecrate yourself entirely to the God to whom you owe everything; desire to help to spread the savor of that divine grace which has brought such good things to you. Vow, in the name of the quickening Spirit, that He who has made you live by faith shall from this day till you enter into heaven, have the best of your thoughts, and your words, and your actions—for you are not your own, you have been quickened from the dead, and you must live in newness of life.

The Lord bless you, dear friends. If you have never spiritually lived, may He give you grace to believe in Jesus this morning, and then you are alive from the dead! And if you are alive already, may He quicken you yet more and more by His eternal Spirit till He brings you to the land of the living on the other side of the Jordan. Amen.

806 A YOUNG MAN'S VISION – ACTS 2:17

A Sermon
Delivered on Thursday Evening, April 16th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Your young men shall see visions." — Acts 2:17

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Luke 10:1-21]

THE ANNUAL SERMON OF THE YOUNG MEN'S ASSOCIATION IN AID OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY

MANY VISIONS have led to the most disastrous results. When Napoleon had a vision of a universal monarchy over which he should preside, with the French eagle for his ensign, he drenched the lands in blood. Many visions have been wretchedly delusive. Men have dreamed of finding the fairy pleasure in the dark forest of sin; carnal joys have danced before their eyes as temptingly as the mirage in the desert, and they have pursued the phantom forms to their misery in this world, and to their eternal ruin in the next. Mistaking license for liberty, and madness for mirth, they have dreamed themselves into hell! Many dreams have sucked the life-blood out of men as vampires do; men have passed from stern reality into dreamland, and while seemingly awake have continued like sleepwalkers to do all things in their sleep. Many pass all their days in one perpetual daydream—speculating, building castles in the air, thinking of what they would do, and vowing how

they would behave themselves. With fine capacities they have driveled away existence, as their theory of life was born of smoke, so the result of their lives has been a cloud. The luxurious indolence of mere resolve, the useless tossing of regrets—these have been all their sluggard life.

For all this, good and grand visions are not unknown; visions which came from the excellent glory; visions which, when young or old men have seen them, have filled them with wisdom, divine grace, and holiness; visions which have worked with such effect upon their minds that they have been lifted up above the level of the sons of men, and made sons of God, co-workers with the eternal! Such visions are given to men whose eyes have been illumined by the Holy Spirit—visions which have come of that eyesalve which only the Holy Spirit can apply; visions which are not bestowed on carnal men nor unveiled to the impure in heart; visions reserved for the men and women elect of God who are sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and made meet to be partakers of the witness of God, and the testimony of His Son.

All divine things, when they first come to men from the Lord, are as visions because man is so little prepared to believe God's thoughts and ways, that he cannot think them to be real. They appear to us to be too great, too good to be real; we look at them rather as things to be desired and wished for than as things that may be actually ours. It must be so while Jehovah's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts; it must be so, that even divine mercy should at first be a burden to the prophet who has its message to deliver, and that the eternal promise should be a vision to the seer who first receives it. We are so gross and carnal, even when most clarified and made fit to receive divine impressions, God's spiritual messages and directions to us must usually at the first float dimly before the sense, and only in later thoughts become solid

and clear. We must take care that we do not neglect heavenly monitions through fear of being considered visionary; we must not be staggered even by the dread of being styled *fanatical*, or out of our minds, for to stifle a thought from *God* is no mean sin.

How much of good in this world would have been lost if good men had quenched the first half-fashioned thoughts which have flitted before them! I mean, for instance, had Martin Luther taken the advice of his teacher when he said to him, "Go your way, silly monk! Go to your cell and pray God, and if it is His will, He will reform the abuses of this church, but what have *you* to do with it?" Supposing the agitated monk had administered an opiate to his soul, what then? Doubtless the gospel to Luther at the first was dim enough; and the idea of reform most vague and indistinct; but had he closed his heart to his vision, how long might not the Romish darkness have brooded over the multitudes of Europe? And George Fox, that most eminent of dreamers who dreamed more and more vividly than any other man, where had been all the testimonies for a spiritual religion? Where all the holy influences for benevolence, for peace, for anti-slavery, for I know not what besides which have streamed upon this world through the agency of the Society of Friends, if the wild Quaker had been content to let his impressions come and go and be forgotten? These things, which nowadays are ordinary Christian doctrines, were considered in his day to be but the prattle of fanatics, even as the reforms which some of us shall live to see are denounced as revolutionary, or ridiculed as Utopian! O young men, if you have received a thought which dashes ahead of your times, hold to it, and work at it till it comes to something! If you have dreamed a dream from the Lord, turn it over and over again till you are quite sure it is not steam from a heated brain, or smoke from hell—and when it is clear to your own heart that it is fire

from off God's altar, then work and pray and wait your time. Perhaps it may take 50 years to work that thought out, or what is worse, you may never live to see it realized, but what of that? You may have to leave that thought sown in the dust, but the thought will not die; it may produce a harvest when you are with the angels! Do not, I pray you, because the thing happens to seem new, or too enthusiastic, or too far ahead, be snubbed into putting it into a corner, but take care of it, and nurture it; and if it is not of God, a little experience will disabuse you of it, let us hope. But if it *is* of the Lord, you will grow in your attachment to it, and by-and-by God will find an opportunity for you to make it practical. The great Father of Spirits does, in fact, say to you when He puts a great design into your keeping, as Pharaoh's daughter said to Jochebed, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." And though the Moses that you nurse may not deliver Israel in your lifetime, yet shall you have your wages if you nurse the thought for God!

Many suggestions which come from God to men are not so much visions to *them* as they are to the outside world. And need we wonder at this? Why, men of science and art have to endure the same ordeal. Stephenson declares that he will make a machine which will run without horse-power, at the rate of 12 miles an hour—and how the Tory benches of the House of Commons, loaded then as now with stupidity, roared at the man as a born fool! How was it proved to a demonstration that if the engine began to work, the wheels might revolve, but the engine never would move an inch, or if it moved at a great speed, the passengers would not be able to breathe? Yet Stephenson lived to see his dream fulfilled, and we have lived to see it a much more wonderful power still. Now, if men of science can endure this, and if we members of the Baptist Mission remember still the roars of laughter which were

launched by Sydney Smith against "the inspired cobbler," when he talked about the conquest of India for the Lord Jesus Christ, we may well be prepared, when we obtain an inspiration from God, to put up with a world of scorn, opposition, and contempt for a little time, and to say, "Never mind, there is a day coming that shall reverse the hasty judgment of this world; you sons of darkness are not a fair jury to sit upon questions of the light of God; you blind men who know not God, nor the glory of His power are not qualified to mount the bench, and sit in judgment upon thoughts which flash from the eternal mind; you may give your judgment, but the Lord shall reverse it, and time which is always with the truth of God, will before long turn the laugh in another direction."

With this rather too long preface about dreaming, I will now confess that, after my own fashion, I too have seen a vision. And though you should say of me in days to come, "Behold, this dreamer comes," yet, as he that has a dream is bid to tell his dream, so I tell mine. My dream is this—I have seen in vision, missionary spirit in England, now so given to slumber, marvelously quickened, awakened, and revived! I have seen—the wish was father to the sight, I have seen the ardor of our first missionary days return to us! I have seen young men eager for the mission field, and old men and fathers sitting in united council to correct mistakes, to devise new methods, or to strengthen the old ones, so that by any means the great chariot of Christ might roll onwards, and that His victories might be more rapid. I thought that I saw, from one end of England to the other, the Christian church stirred with a deep sense of her duty to the heathen Christian ministers full of pangs and sorrows on account of dying myriads. I thought that I saw Christian men and women universally contributing generously of their substance, while men fitted for the work pushed forward at the call of the great Lord of the harvest to toil in the

great harvest field. I have seen such a vision, and by God's grace, we shall see it a fact! Would to God that the captivity of our Zion might be turned—then would we be like they who dream; then should our mouth be filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing while the heathen would cry, "The Lord has done great things for them."

First, this evening, I shall *try to justify my vision, and show that it is by no means unreasonable;* secondly, I shall in a few words *elaborate the vision or give the details of it;* and then, in the third place, as time may suit us, I shall endeavor to *promote its realization.*

I. First, **LET US JUSTIFY OUR VISION**.

We have dreamed that the missionary spirit was suddenly revived among us, that missions were pushed on with greater ardor, and that God vouchsafed to them a far greater blessing than He has done of late. There have been more incoherent dreams than *that* in this world, and for this reason—that which we have dreamed of is evidently needed. Brothers and sisters, we are not among those who are prepared to croak and complain at the very first difficulty that may arise in a great enterprise, but no man can look upon our own Baptist Mission, and I suppose we are not much worse than others, without feeling that there is a pretty general flagging in missionary interest. And albeit that the funds may not much have fallen off, yet the annual recurrence of a debt, which is far from being welcome, together with other matters, goes to show that missionary zeal needs rekindling. This results partly from the fact that the novelty of the thing has worn off; the work having now been on the anvil for 50 years and more, and partly because we have had few very startling incidents of late to evoke a display of enthusiasm. That the missionary fire exists is certain, for when the recent events in Jamaica acted as it were as a refreshing breeze, the embers glowed, and flamed anew. It is certainly there, for the heart of the church is alive. It is there,

but it is slumbering. You who remember the thundering voice of William Knibb, and the great meetings which would be gathered when some such brethren returned home to tell what God had done among the heathen, must feel that you have fallen upon dull, uninteresting days in mission life; it is as when the thing is flat and stale, and when men have reached the dregs of the wine, and the new wine is not in the cluster. Well, then, if it is so, let it be remembered that missionary zeal ought not to flag; if there is any one point in which the Christian church ought to keep its fervor at a white heat; it is concerning *missions* to the heathens! If there is anything about which we cannot tolerate lukewarmness, it is in the matter of sending the gospel to a dying world; how can we expect, in such an enterprise, with difficulties to our poor weakness so insuperable, that we shall ever succeed if any of our strength is left unused? With all we have we are weak enough, but if we send but *part* of the army to the battle, if we exert but half of our strength, how can we expect that the blessing of God shall rest upon us? Depend upon it that the flagging of zeal at home acts like a canker abroad. When the heart of Christianity in England does not throb vigorously, every single limb of the missionary body feels the decline, and there is not a missionary anywhere, from the snows of Labrador, to the burning heats of Africa, who is not enervated and injured when the Christian public at home begin to weary in well doing. It needs, then; it *imperatively* needs, that our vision should be made a *fact*.

We may be excused our vision because *it is very possible that it may be realized*. It is not a thing too hard to look for. It was far harder work, surely, to have *established* the mission than it will be most thoroughly and earnestly to *revive* it! If we will but inquire into what may have been the causes of any decline that exists, we shall not find them, I think, to be very deep, nor to be difficult of remedy; they are but superficial, and a little loving

earnestness will soon remove them. Brothers and sisters, as a denomination we are beginning to cluster more closely around our standard; we have been up to now somewhat scattered over the field—isolated, divided, and therefore weak. But now we feel that our strength must lie, under God, in our *unity*, and our ranks are classing each man to his brother; we feel the fire of sacred love burning in our hearts, and as we come together and begin to talk of the difficulties before us in a fraternal spirit, they will all vanish! Lovingly correcting errors, carefully removing excrescences, and boldly advancing, the stone shall be rolled away from the sepulcher before we reach it, for if not in God's name, and by His strength, we will never roll it away ourselves, and if there has been a flagging, this very meeting, in which there are young and ardent spirits, shall help to supply the material with which to kindle a fire which shall nevermore grow dim.

More than that—it is not only possible that our dream may become a reality, *but it is very probable*, for so it always has been. If ever God's church has declined for a little while, unexpectedly there has been yielded a season of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord. We know not what God has in store; He is great at surprises! When the devil is most secure upon his throne, then God springs a mine, and blows his empire into atoms. Just when the wise virgins, and the foolish alike have allowed their lamps to burn low, then is the cry heard, "Behold, the bridegroom comes!" and those virgins arise and trim their lamps. So will it be among us. I am hopeful that in answer to earnest prayer, God will speedily send among us a general intensity of desire for the glory of Christ, accompanied by broken hearts, and weeping eyes for the perishing heathen, and a solemn resolve that in Jehovah's strength we will spare no pains, and neglect no efforts by which we may make the gospel known unto the ends of the earth. Yes, a thorough

renovation of the missionary society, a resurrection of the mission spirit, and an awakening of our churches is delightfully probable—it were wretched indeed, if it were not so!

One thing more we will say upon this topic, namely, *that such a renewal is solemnly required of us.* What are our personal obligations to the Crucified? What owe we *not* to the gospel which has delivered us from an eternity of woe, and has guaranteed to us an everlasting career of blessedness? This night, redeemed, regenerated, adopted, justified, sanctified, with your feet upon the rock, a song in your mouth, and your goings established—will you not feel it to be a call from heaven that you should be in earnest to gather in the Lord's chosen out of all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth? Did our Savior slumber in His life-work? Was He tardy in His service for our redemption? Then might we grow lax? But if setting His face to Jerusalem, He panted for the baptism in which He was to be baptized, and was straitened until it was accomplished, then He claims of us, according to our measure, the same steadfastness of resolve, and perseverance of purpose, and sacrifice of self! I charge you, young men, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be not slow to spend and be spent for Him. *All* is too little— shall we give Him *less* than all? Fervent services are too poor—shall we be lukewarm? Descend, O heavenly fire, and now inflame us, for less than Your flames cannot enable us to live as live we should!

I will not tarry upon this point. You have already forgiven me my dream.

II. LET US PROCEED TO ELABORATE THE VISION.

I was asked principally to address young men this evening; I am a young man myself, and therefore if I utter anything exceedingly visionary, you will observe its justification in the text, "Your young men shall see visions." My dream seemed to take this shape: *In order that missionary work should be reformed,*

revived, and carried on with energy, and with hope of success, it seemed necessary that especially among our young members there should be a revival of intense and earnest prayer, and anxious sympathy with the missionary work. The power of prayer can never be overrated. They who cannot serve God by preaching need not regret it if they can be mighty in prayer. The true strength of the church lies there; this is the sinew which moves the arm of Omnipotence. If a man can but pray, he can do anything! He who knows how to overcome the Lord in prayer has heaven and earth at his disposal; there is nothing a man cannot accomplish if he can but prevail with God in prayer. Now, I will not say that we ought to have our prayer meetings for missionary objectives more largely attended—everybody knows this, but does everybody try to attend? But I will say this, which is more likely to be forgotten, that it were well if we had *settled* private seasons of devotion each of us, especially to intercede with God for the conversion of the heathen. It will be a notable day when the young men of this society say, "Not only will we attend the prayer meetings for this objective, but we will each one as before the Lord, make it a matter of conscience that there shall be at least one hour in the week sacredly hedged around, and spent in private prayer for the missionary work." Beneath the banyan tree you will not stand surrounded by black faces to tell of Krishnu's Christ; but in your own little room by the old armchair you will as surely be bringing down showers of blessings upon the heathen by importunate entreaties. Here our old men and our matrons, as well as our young men and maidens, may unite. If it is so, that the entire church shall send up one impassioned, continuous, prevalent cry to God, "O Lord, make bare Your arm for Christ, and for His truth!" verily, verily, I say unto you He shall avenge you speedily though He bear long with you! Your prayers shall come up unto the ears

of the Lord God of Sabaoth, and He will reveal the glory of His power!

Next, if our young men who see visions will *follow up their prayers with practical effort, then we shall see in our churches a larger and more efficient staff of collectors and contributors.* We should then find men who would give of their substance as a matter of principle, give themselves, or in other fair proportion so that the kingdom of Christ should never have an empty treasury. I speak to some who sit often in this place who need not to have a word said to them by way of stirring them up to generosity, for I can glory in them in this respect, that they do beyond all that I could expect, but I wish that the same spirit of giving were paramount throughout all the church, that men would give, not because they are asked, nor by way of emulation or compulsion, but because God has given to them, and they recognize their stewardship. A few men in a church may often move the whole to generosity; the example of a few and those few, perhaps, not the richest, may be contagious to the whole mass. And a few earnest young people, especially, may often push right and left with their proverbial enthusiasm till they have stirred the inert mass, and compelled the whole body to be generous to the cause of Jesus Christ!

Up till now my dream has been reasonable you will say. I will now be more visionary; if we were all praying for missions, and all giving for their support, it might be very well asked of us, "What do you do more than others?" For what Romanist is there who is not zealous for the spread of *his* religion? What *heathen* is there who does not give quite as much as any of us give, yes, and a great deal more than we give, to his superstitions? But, supposing next to this, that there should be a number of young men here who know each other very well, young men who have been trained in the same sanctuary, nurtured in the same church—who should meet together

tomorrow, or at such other time as shall be convenient, and say to one another, "Now, we are in business; we have just commenced in life, and God is prospering us, more or less; we are taking wives to ourselves; our children are coming around us, but still, we trust we are never going to permit ourselves to be swallowed up in a mere worldly way of living—now, what ought *we* to do for missions?" And suppose the inquiry should be put, "Is there one among us who could devote himself to go and teach the heathen for us? As we, most of us, may not have the ability, or do not feel called to the work, is there one out of 12 of us young men who have grown up side by side in the Sunday school who has the ability, and who feels called to go? Let us make it a matter of prayer, and when the Holy Spirit says, 'Separate So-and-So to the work,' then we, the other 11 who remain, will do this—we will say to him, 'Now, brother, you cannot stay at home to make your fortune or to earn a competence; you are now giving yourself up to a very arduous and earnest enterprise, and we will support you. We know you, we have confidence in you; you go down into the pit—we will hold the rope. Go forth in connection with our own denominational society, but we will bear the expense year by year among ourselves! Have you faith enough to go; trusting that the Lord will provide? Then we will have faith enough, and generosity enough to say that your needs shall be to our care. You *preach* for Christ; *we* will make money for Christ. When you open the Bible for Christ, we will be taking down the shop shutters for Christ; and while you are unfolding the banner of Christ's love, we will be unfolding the calicos, or selling the groceries; and we pledge ourselves *always* to set aside your portion, because as our brother, you are doing *our* work." I wish we had such godly clubs as these—holy confederacies of earnest young men who thus would love their missionary, feel for him, hear from him continually, and undertake to supply

his support. Why, on such a plan as that, I should think they would give 50 times, 100 times as much as ever they are likely to give to an impersonal *society,* or to a man whose name they only know, but whose face they never saw. I wonder whether I shall ever live to see a club of that kind. I wonder whether such a club will ever spring up in the midst of this church, or any of the churches in London. If it shall be so, I shall be glad to have seen a vision of it!

Further, I have also dreamed that there would spring up in our churches a very large number of young men who would count it to be the very highest ambition of their lives to give themselves up to the work of Jesus Christ abroad, and who seeing that in London and throughout England men may hear the gospel if they will, while many of the heathen cannot hear it, like or no, would feel it to be their duty to serve Christ in the foreign field. And I have wondered whether we should have these noble fellows coming by the score, and saying, "Here am I, send me." Then I have considered whether God would pour out enough of the missionary spirit upon these men to make them say, "Well, the Missionary Society is in debt and cannot take us; it has enough men to support already. It is doing a good work enough, I will not interfere with it; I do not want to be a burden to any brethren; will you send me out, and let me exercise my faith in God, only having this for my comfort, that you will stand at my back and give me what you can, while I will only draw upon you for what I cannot get for myself?" I wonder whether we shall see 50 or 100 missionaries within the next year or two leaving our shores, whose passage has been paid, and who will land in some foreign country with just enough about them to keep them till the language has been learned, and who will then, in confidence in God, set about working to support themselves? I set Paul before you, young men; when he preached the gospel at the first, he was a tent-

maker, and he earned his own living. Are there no occupations in these days by which a man may earn his living, and yet preach the gospel? It is not the best thing to do—the best thing is for a man to give all his time to his ministry, but if you cannot have the best, you must have the second best. Are there not to be found physicians who in China and in India, would not only procure subsistence, but much more, and might proclaim the gospel at the same time? Thank God there is such a thing as a medical mission! Thank God that the profession of medicine has not been behind in sending heroes to the field! But are there no other occupations? Young men, are there no clerkships to be had in India? I find men going out there by scores to make their fortunes, and ruin their constitutions; and I see young women going out to get married to Indian settlers almost on speculation. Have we no young men and women who will go across the sea, and find their way round the Cape of Good Hope to preach the gospel, intending to use their commercial pursuits as a means of introduction and support? Surely it must be so!

I know that at this present moment there are hundreds of Christian men living along the coasts of South America, especially of the Brazils and the Argentine Republic, where skilled artisans, engineers, and such like are in constant request by the government. And I have often hoped to hear that some of these men were originating Christian missions; I have often wondered why more has not been done of that kind. We hear of our young brethren going forth to Morocco, to Algiers, to Turkey, and Egypt— they are in demand in almost every part of the earth, for the young men of England are the very pick and prime of humanity! The various trades which are connected with machinery are scarcely to be taught except by their means. What about their *faith* if they do not become evangelists? O young men and women, what grand

opportunities must open up before some of you! I am sure they will, and if you did but set your hearts to it with a full resolve that you would not live the dead-and-alive life of most of us, but would distinguish yourselves in Christ's service, what might you not achieve! If there were a will, there would be a way—and if there were a fixed purpose, God would send the means! And He who quickened you to such a degree of spiritual life that you could not rest unless you were telling the gospel to the ungodly; would not let His providence so obstruct His grace as to shut the door in your face when you were willing to be serviceable to His cause.

"That is a dream," says one. Well, may some of you dream it, and in the midst of the dream may there rise up before you a face which, as it shall by degrees settle and become clear, and you shall discern its features, shall be wonderfully like your own; and as you wake may you have to say, "Here am I, Lord, send me; for where You would have me go, there will I go to proclaim the name, and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Oh when shall I see once again the missionary going from door to door, determined, according to his Master's command, that whatever things they set before him he will eat, believing that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and that he is to expect to find his hire among those to whom he preaches the gospel? When shall I see once again the missionary believing that the acceptance of hospitality is the master-key of missions, and that the eating of the strangers' salt is the nearest way to put before them the bread of life, and the reception of hospitable courtesy the very stepping-stone towards the giving out of the precious gospel? May we live to see this! We shall, by God's grace, if His Spirit visits us!

III. Lastly, and but very briefly—what shall we do to assist **THE REALIZATION OF THIS VISION**?

We can all do something if we love the Lord, and that something will be eminently a blessing to ourselves. If ever we are to see the missionary spirit brought to its very highest and most perfect condition*, it must be by each individual's own personal piety mounting to the very highest degree of elevation.* Why, we are not half saints—we seem, many of us to forget what sainthood means! We are content to be just saved, like the drowning man dragged to shore just alive, and that is all. O that we were not satisfied with this, but that our love to Christ was on fire; our hope in Jesus Christ bright and clear; our faith in God firm and unstaggering! O that we served Christ, not at a snail's pace, but within the utmost energy of the best conditioned manhood! O that we loved Christ, and worked for Christ up to the last ounce at which the engine could be driven! O that we could but just for *once* see what manhood could do when God was in it! O that some of us were raised up to be as Brainerd; living, dying, through love to Christ! O that we were men who were conquered by divine love, led in fetters as slaves to the blessed captivity of love to the souls of men! May it grow into a passion with you, men and women, to snatch fire-brands from the flame! You will never be very useful until it is so. If holy work is a mere diversion for your leisure moments, you will do nothing; you must make a trade of it, a solemn occupation of it; it must be your calling, your meat, and your drink to do the will of Him who sent you. When the Christian church glows in this fashion it will swell with an intense heat like a volcano whose tremendous furnaces cannot be contained within itself, but its sides begin to move and bulge, and then after a rumbling and a heaving, a mighty sheet of fire shoots right up to heaven, and afterwards streams of flaming lava run from its red lips down, burning their way along the plain beneath. Oh, to get such a fire for God's cause into the heart of the Christian church till she began to heave and throb with unquenchable

emotion! Then a mighty sheet of the fire-prayer should go up towards heaven, and afterwards the burning lava of her all-conquering zeal should flow over all lands till all nations should inquire, "What is this new thing in the earth, and what is this modern miracle and what is this cross of Christ for which men live and die?"

I would say, as subsidiary to this great thing, which the main matter, is tonight, *that young men and young women would do well to feed the flame of their zeal with greater information as to the condition of the world in reference to our mission-work.* I wish that those who supply us with our periodical missionary literature had an idea of the great difficulty there is in keeping awake while reading it. I should be glad if they could by any means put a small allowance of salt into it, or serve it up in a more tempting form. I do not plead for making it into light literature, far from it, but if our editors could give us something that would tempt the literary or the spiritual palate, it would be well. But, young men, you are not dependent upon periodical literature; I almost regret that there is such a thing; there are solid books to be read; there are libraries teeming with the works of missionaries—their travels, their adventures. You can read of the history of heathen nations—their desolations, their needs, their crimes, their idolatries, their infamies. There is a great literature for you; you may not have time to get through it all, but if you read *some* of it, I think you will feel a great accession to your zeal.

When you have gained such information, which may be as fuel to the fire, I pray you *keep yourselves right in this matter by constant, energetic efforts in connection with works at home.* Those who do not serve God at home are of no use anywhere. It is all very well to talk about what you would do if you could speak to the Hindus; nonsense! What do you do when you are in the streets of Whitechapel? You will be of no use whatever in Calcutta unless you are of use in Poplar or Bermondsey! The human

mind is the same everywhere; its sins may take another form, but there are the same difficulties in one place as in another. It is all very well for you to turn a sort of Don Quixote in imagination, and dream of what you would do if you went out upon a spiritual crusade as a heavenly knight-errant, tilting against windmills, but just try your hand at the conversion of that young man who sits next to you in the pew. See what you can do for Jesus Christ in the shop; see whether you can serve your Master in that little Bible class of which you are a member. Rest assured that no missionary ardor really burns in the breast of any man who does not love the souls of those who live in the same house, and dwell in the same neighborhood. Give me that man for a missionary of whom it is said that when he took a lodging in a house, all the other inhabitants were brought to God within six months; or he was a son, and his father was unconverted, but he gave the Lord no rest till he saw his parent saved; or he was a tradesman, and while he was pushing his business earnestly, he always found time to be an evangelist. *That* is the man who will maintain missionary fervor alive at home, and *that* is the man who will help to promote missionary effort abroad.

Brothers and sisters, here are the practical points—have a higher degree of piety, a wider and more extensive knowledge, and a more practical zeal in God's work near to your hand.

But oh, do make sure that you are saved yourselves! Do make sure that you yourselves know the Christ whom you profess to teach! That missionary-box; what is it but an infamous sham if you put into it your offering, but withhold your heart? You talk about missionary collecting, missionary meetings, lectures to the young, and I know not what, when you yourself are a stranger to the power of vital godliness! No, my dear friends, begin at home! May the Lord begin with *you*. O young men, young women, are you yet unsaved? Then

instead of your pitying the heathen, the heathen may well pity you! How might a heathen with a tender heart stand here and say, "If that Bible is true; if that gospel which you talk of has really come from God; if Christ is the Savior, and if there is no salvation but of Him, then how I pity you who have heard about it, and yet have rejected it! How I pity you, because your own Savior, whom you profess to serve, out of His own mouth of love has said it—that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you!" Oh, then, let it be tonight that you give your heart to God! And when you have given your heart to Him, *then* think of the matter of which I have spoken.

God grant that my vision may become a fact. May you help to make it so, and Christ shall have the glory. Amen.

807 GOOD NEWS FOR LOYAL SUBJECTS – I COR. 15:25

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 19th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"He must reign." — I Corinthians 15:25

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Revelation 6; 9:1-16]

"MUST" is for the king, and concerning King Jesus there is a divine necessity that He *must* reign. He was once the King of misery—in that kingdom He reigned supreme; that crown of thorns is preeminent in the sorrows which it signifies. O King of grief and tears and death, who shall rival You? Today He is the King of glory, enthroned far above all principalities and powers; He is so glorious that when seraphs are asked, "Who is the King of glory?" they mention no other name but His! He is the King once dishonored, but now exalted in the highest heaven; of Him the text says not only that He must live, though that is a precious truth, for while He lives, we shall also live; nor merely does it say that He shall enjoy a degree of reverence, though it is delightful to us to think of His being honored in any heart, and being had in reverence by even a handful of men, but it is said, *"He must reign."* Not a place, but the *chief* place shall be His, not bare existence, but preeminence; not honor, but superlative glory. He must reign! No seat but the throne shall become Him, no ornaments but those of

royalty shall befit Him—*"He must reign."* He must reign because He is *God*. "The Lord reigns" must always stand a truth of God. Jehovah exists eternally, infinite in power and wisdom; who but He should be King of kings and Lord of lords? And since the Man of Nazareth is the everlasting Father, since of His generation there was no beginning, and none can count the number of His years, He must reign from the very fact of His essential Deity! He must reign as man—for the Lord has made a covenant with David that the scepter should not depart from him, that of his seed there should sit upon the throne of Israel forever a King to rule in righteousness, and Jesus of Nazareth is that King! Israel has no other monarch, neither have they sought after any other king; as a nation they have been broken and scattered and peeled, and as a united people they cannot be gathered under any other headship than that of the house of David, of which Jesus Christ is the lineal and rightful descendant, and who claims and keeps the scepter in His own hand. He *must* also reign as the Mediator, the Intercessor, the Interposer, and the Interpreter, one of a thousand. *"He must reign."* Behold, at this time the sovereignty of the world is committed to His keeping; He is the headship of His church, the originator of providence; His is the ruling of heaven, and earth, and hell, as the mediatorial Monarch; and until that time when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even our Father, He *must* reign, for so has God appointed and settled Him to be a King and a Priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec. What a sweet comfort it is to think that none can snatch the government from the hand of Jesus, for, "the government shall be upon His shoulder." None can drive Christ from the headship of the church, nor the headship of providence for the church; He must be at the helm, none shall remove Him; both as God and man, and as the Mediator of the new covenant, according to the express words of our text, *"He must reign."*

There seemed to me to be so sweet a thought wrapped up in these three words—so precious, so full of all manner of delights, that if the Holy Spirit did but enable us to enjoy it, we should not lack today for wines on the lees, well refined, and fat things, yes, fat things full of marrow! I shall endeavor, as I may be helped, first, at some length to *discuss the reasons for this "must";* then, secondly, to *draw out encouragement from it;* and, thirdly, to *dwell upon its admonitions.*

I. First, "He *must* reign." **WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR THIS "MUST"?** The answer shall be sevenfold. The Lamb, as seen by John, had seven horns of power, and here are seven reasons why He should possess the throne forever.

1. First, because *His empire in itself is such as to ensure perpetuity.* There have been many empires in this world of which men said for the time, that they must exist, and they supposed that if they were overthrown, the very pillars of the earth would be removed. Yet in due time they grew gray with years, and were swept away as worn out things, and it was a joy for the nations when the hoary abominations were consumed. The most colossal empires have melted like visions of the night, and the most substantial creations of human power have passed away like the fleeting dew of the morning. But, *"He must reign."* He must reign, first of all, because His reign over human mind is based upon the truth of God. There have been various dynasties of thought—at one time Plato reigned supreme over thoughtful minds; then Aristotle held a long and rigid rule; he so ruled and governed the entire universe of mind, that even the Christian religion was continually infected and tainted by his philosophical speculations. But another philosophy found out his weakness and supplanted him, to be in its turn subverted by the next. As men grow more enlightened, or the human mind passes through another phase of change, men say to their once-revered rabbis and honored teachers, "Stand out

of the way! A new light has arisen! We have come to a new point of thought, and we are finished with you." Things which were accounted sure and wise in years gone by, are now ridiculed by us as the height of folly; and why, because these systems of philosophy and thought have not been based upon the truth of God. There has been a worm in the center of the fair apple of knowledge; there has been a flaw in the foundations of the great master-builder, they have built upon sand, and their edifices have tumbled to irretrievable ruin. But the truth which Jesus taught from the mountaintop, reads as if it were delivered but yesterday! Christianity is as suitable to the 19th century as to the first; it has the dew of its youth upon it. As Solomon's Song says of Christ, His locks are bushy and black as a raven to show His youth and vigor, and so may I say of the gospel—it is still as young and vigorous, as full of masculine energy as ever it was! We who preach it fear not for the result; give us a fair stage and no favor, and the Samson of divine truth, its locks still unshorn, will yet remove the pillars of the temple of error, and bring ruin to the powers of hell. Jesus *must* reign as the royal teacher because all He teaches is based upon the surest truth.

Our Lord's dominion *over human hearts,* too, is absolutely sure, because *it is based upon divine love*. To illustrate what I mean, I need only remind you of the life of the great Napoleon. He founded an empire—an empire which has not always been justly estimated, for perhaps unwittingly Napoleon was a grand advancer of human liberty, since he first taught the old kings that the pretense of divine right could not keep crowns upon unpopular heads, and that young men from the ranks might yet mount a throne! He produced a code of laws which for simplicity of justice, has never been surpassed. Still, he relied too much upon coercion and the sword—his enormous armies were his bulwark and security; strong battalions were the

cornerstone of his empire, and though for a while he stood firm, and armies advancing against him were only like so many waves dashing against the rocks of his tremendous power, yet, after all his many wars, he was overthrown, and he was said to have uttered in St. Helena that memorable speech—"My kingdom has passed away; I founded it upon the sword, and it is gone; Jesus Christ established a kingdom upon love, and it will last forever." So it *will* last; when all that kings and princes can do with state-craft, and with power, shall have dissolved as hoar frost in the sun, Christ's kingdom *must* stand because it is based upon the Law of love. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of love, His teachings are the doctrines of love, His precepts are the rule of love, His Spirit is the Creator of love; His whole religion is saturated with love, and because of this His kingdom cannot be moved!

Once more, the kingdom of Jesus *must* exist because *it is the one great remedy which this sad woebegone world requires.* Though men know it not, this is the only balm for earth's poor bleeding wounds. earth cries out every now and then like a sleeper in delirium; she cries out for the coming man, and eyes everywhere are watching! Men scarcely know why—they look for a man who shall right the wrong of mankind, and commence on a glorious era, that good time coming for which men have looked so long. Jesus is the coming Man—He alone is the daystar from on high who shall visit us with light and healing, and replace our darkness with an everlasting morning! The world is like the troubled sea that cannot rest, tossed to and fro, and there is but one foot which can tread its waves, and but one voice which can say, "Peace, be still." The world's joy lies now in the tomb, it has been dead four days already, and by this time it stinks and the poor world does not know that there is only one voice that can bring back earth's paradise, give a resurrection to her buried mirth—Jesus of Nazareth it is

who is the true liberator of captive nations, "To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death." The world will never rest till it rests in Christ! It groans and travails in pain together until now, scarcely knowing what it wants, but to us it is given to know that earth needs her Lord to reign over her, and He shall bring her joy and peace! The agonizing groans of earth demand the sovereignty of Jesus, and therefore we believe that He *must* reign, for God will yet give His creature what it needs. Our Lord's dominion is in itself so securely founded upon truth and love, and is so demanded by a bleeding world, that *"He must reign."*

2. Secondly, He must reign because *His Father decrees it.* How delightful it is to think of the eternal purposes concerning our Lord! Our God did not make this world without a plan, nor does He rule it without a scheme; whatever Jehovah decrees, stands fast and firm, for these are His words, "Has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Whatever the eternal mind resolves upon is certain to be fulfilled; though men should strive against it, and devils should rise with infernal rage, yet if Jehovah decrees it, who shall stand against the eternal will? Go, fool, who thinks to stand against God, and dash yourself upon the bosses of His buckler and be broken in pieces! Or run upon the point of His glittering spear to your own destruction, for, against the eternal, who shall stand? His thunder in the heavens, though it is but the whisper of His voice, makes the nations tremble! The going forth of His might in nature, though it is the hiding of His power, makes all the inhabitants of the earth shake. Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, "What are You doing?" The eternal purpose of God has ordained that Jesus Christ shall reign eternally; He *must* reign from the river even to the ends of the earth. Up till now God has maintained the throne of His Son. Read the second Psalm and see: "The kings of the earth

set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision; then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion." Yes, the divine determination, the everlasting covenant, and the immutable promises of covenant grace all unite in the resolve that Christ shall reign, and therefore well says the text, *"He must reign."*

3. But in the third place, *divine justice demands it.* Jesus Christ *must* reign. Beloved, you cannot imagine for a moment that He who judges all the earth will be unjust, and unjust to His own Son! Our Lord came into this world to bleed and die, that He might have a reward for His pains. And the Father covenanted with Him: "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days." "I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong." The Father promised that He should be a leader and a commander of the people, and determined, as the result of His humiliation, that He should mount to a superior throne as the Son of man, and the Son of God. Shall God belie His word? Begone, blasphemous thought! Shall God defraud the only-begotten? Down, suggestion of the pit of hell! Shall Jesus die in vain? Shall He pour out His soul unto death, and shall there be no crown for Him? Shall the promised diadem be withheld? Beloved, we know it cannot be so! As we stand at the foot of the cross, we feel that every pang He suffered guaranteed to Him that He should be King of kings, and Lord of lords. Oh, it would be indeed sad for us to imagine that yonder wondrous work of His in redemption should remain unrewarded with the promised crown! It were vain for us to trust in the redemption, for we might be as well deluded in it as He, if there were no honor brought to Him for all that

He endured for us. Courage, brothers and sisters, there can be no doubt about it—since immutable justice demands it, Jesus *"must reign."*

4. The fourth reason is found in this, that *Christ's reigning is worked into the order of providence.* A few months ago snow was on the ground, the frost was sharp, the winds were cold, the trees were bare— but it was in the order of providence that there should be a spring. And though the seasons grew colder, and the dreary months passed on, and not a flower peeped up from under the soil, nor a golden crocus opened its cup, yet God had purposed it—the spring must come. Walk in your gardens today when all the fruit trees are opening their blossoms and pouring forth their perfumes in the air, and the birds are at the highest point of song, and you will think, "Yes, it has surely come; spring smiles on us, after all." The cold blustering winds, and the cold dark nights could not prevent it, for the vernal blossoms are on every bough. Here is spring, and in its right hand it holds a faithful promise of the coming summer. We cannot say that in any one day in all these last months, spring seemed to make any great advance. You cannot put your finger upon a certain day or hour, and say, "Now the weather is manifestly turning." But the sweet days of bud and blossom have been introduced with a beautiful gentleness and growth; even when the days lengthened we saw no great progress, for the cold strengthened, and if we enjoyed a mild day, there came a biting night of frost. But, surely and steadily the veins of the trees were filled with the life-blood of sap, and the buds first swelled, and then revealed their glories. Mother earth yielded to the roots of plants and trees fresh vigor, and helped them to put on their green array, and now we look for the beauties of summer, and the golden sheaves of autumn with sure and certain hope. So Christ's reigning is woven into the warp and woof of providence, and though He has long been lifted on

high, and has not yet drawn all men to Him, it is coming—and if we have faith we may almost see it. His kingdom is coming! The time of the singing of the birds is drawing near! There have been dark times, but the light has arisen! There have been times of shameful lukewarmness, but now and then a live coal has been sent from off the altar to touch the lip of some favored seer whose power has turned the tide of the church's zeal once more. Rest assured that nothing can possibly resist the kingdom of Jesus Christ—His kingdom shall come! He shall have dominion, and His foes shall bow; He shall come in His own proper person, and shall sit upon David's throne. Though the wheels of providence are so high that they are terrible, they are all full of eyes, and every eye looks to Christ. "Upon one stone shall be seven eyes," yes, all the eyes of providence look upon Jesus our cornerstone, and in the divine economy, "all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose," and chiefly for the glory of Him who loved God best of all, and was first chosen in the divine decree. That Jesus shall reign is the end, aim, and design of providence. How I rejoice to believe that if we serve God, the very stones of the field are in league with us, and the beasts of the field are at peace with us, and as it was said by Deborah in her memorable song, "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera," so all created things are allies of the righteous cause and adversaries of evil. The marches of years, the advance of months, and the arrangements of days all fight like armed men the wrong, and march side by side with the armies of the Lord of hosts sworn to do battle for Jesus and His throne, for *"He must reign."*

5. I must not tarry long on any one point, and therefore, our fifth argument for Jesus' kingdom is that *the Holy Spirit has been given to the church to promote this glorious end.* At the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out—then the whole

church was baptized with a sacred influence, and ever since then the Holy Spirit has never been withdrawn from the Christian church. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." We often unbelievingly pray for the Holy Spirit as if He were not still with us—as if He were not perpetually resident among the sons of men. He is here, always here, always dwelling in the Christian church. Now consider who the Holy Spirit is—He is the blessed God Himself, one person of the glorious Trinity in unity, and He is therefore the possessor of infinite power. In the world of mind He can work according to His own will, and can convince men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He can soften the most hardened; He can turn to kindness the cruelest, and lead into light the most darkened. There are none beyond the range of the operation of the Holy Spirit, and none who shall be able to finally resist His influence when He puts forth the fullness of His might, for who can stop omnipotence? Now, brothers and sisters, the possession of the Holy Spirit is the church's treasury; here is her battle-ax and here her weapons of war. Do you speak of the tower of David where a thousand bucklers did hang, all shields of mighty men? The possession of the Holy Spirit secures a far greater power than all the bucklers of mighty men could be; Solomon speaks of the church's bed, and says that around it were fourscore men, each man with his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night. But the Holy Spirit is a greater protection than the ablest bodyguard of warriors, His dove-like wings perpetually brood over the Lord's chosen, and guard them from every ill, according to the promise, "I, the Lord, do keep it, I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Ho, you who preach Christ in the street, or teach Him in the school, do not become discouraged under difficulties when you remember that you are workers together *with God,* and that with

you, when you speak the truth for Jesus, there goes forth an irresistible power from the Holy Spirit Himself which none shall be able to gainsay or to resist! This is the church's power—let her seek more of it, and, possessing it let her rest assured that the purpose for which she has been raised up will be accomplished, for Jesus Christ *must* and *shall* reign if the Spirit of God is at work to ensure His sovereignty.

6. Sixthly, our Lord Jesus Christ *must* reign because *He is naturally the chief of the human race.* When all Israel were gathered together to choose a king, they selected Saul who was in stature, head and shoulders taller than the rest. They would have the strongest soldier to lead the van, but if my Lord and Master were to come into this world—if men's eyes were but opened, and their senses were but trained to right perception, they would no sooner put eyes on Him than they would say, "He is the chief among 10,000 and the altogether lovely: let Him wear the crown." Remember that in this present state the good often go to the wall and the most worthy are the least esteemed, but in the long run it is a rule of God's government that the best shall be uppermost. And when the last great rectification shall come, you will find that those who were really lowest in character will be lowest in perdition, and those who were highest in their service of God shall be highest in esteem among the sons of men. Jesus Christ must take the highest place, because He is highest, and there is none to rival Him—

"No creature can with Him compare
Among the sons of men;
Fairer He is than all the fair
Who fill the heavenly train."

Once but get a clear, spiritual glimpse of Him, and you will acknowledge His surpassing superiority—

"Soon as faith the Lord can see,
Bleeding on the cross for me,
Quick my idols all depart,
Jesus gets and fills my heart."

O stone-blind eyes, if you could but see Him, how you would be fixed on Him in one long fascinated gaze! O blind world, if you had grace enough to see but half the beauties of Christ, how you would cease your rebellion, and fall down to worship the matchless Prince! But the blindness and stubbornness of humankind make men enemies to their best friend, and make them see no beauty where there is all beauty, and no perfection wherever perfection dwells. As well might men say that there is no light from the sun as declare that there is no loveliness in Him; as well might they say that there is no salt in the sea as that there is no sweetness in Christ, for He is altogether lovely! All preciousness, at its very highest degrees, is found commingled in His gracious character. Let Him be King then! He *must* reign! It is impossible that yonder black prince, that fiend of hell, that traitor, that enemy of the human race should always reign! Down with him; down with him as they did in the town of Mansoul, when they broke the images of Diabolus, casting them to the ground. It is not possible that the devil should always be king over God's creatures; let Immanuel be exalted, and let His loyal subjects bow before Him, and rejoice in His crown and scepter! He *must* reign, then, because of the excellence of His character.

7. And lastly upon this point, He must reign because *the power to reign belongs to Him.* "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." "He has all power given unto Him in heaven and in earth." "Go you, therefore," says He, "and teach all nations." Jesus Christ is no puny pretender to the throne,

nor a rightful owner without power to win His own, but as His cause is good, His arm is strong. The power of Immanuel is equal to His right—He *must*, therefore, reign! What a vision that is of Christ on the white horse, riding forth conquering and to conquer, and all His saints following Him in the same triumphant style, His sword going out of His mouth, the preaching of the eternal gospel being still the power of God unto salvation. This is what He is doing now—this is what He shall do till He comes with His iron rod to break the nations in pieces, like a potter's vessel, and dash His enemies to pieces. He has the power to reign, a power of love which He puts into the gospel which by-and-by He will exchange for the power of vengeance, when He takes the throne and sits there to judge the nations according to their works. What a total overthrow the powers of darkness will sustain! They will not have a thought with which to comfort themselves; when the last great battle shall come, and the campaign between Christ and the prince of evil shall be over, there will not remain a handful of spoil in the hand of the enemy— not one old banner or tattered flag belonging to the Lord's hosts to hang up in the hall. "They will be beaten," as the text puts it, "like the chaff on the summer's threshing floor." "And you shall winnow them," says the prophet, "and the wind shall carry them away." The black horse went down to the sea of almighty love with his rider, and began to drink up that sea, but he could not do it; he snorted, and drank, and drank again of the brine which sickened his very soul, but malice urged him on, and so he drank again, and waded breast-deep into the ocean. Nor stayed he in his fury, but plunged farther and farther, till he was drowned in the inexhaustible depths. I think I see the black carcass submerged far down in the abyss—death and hell drowned in the sea of almighty love and power, and the kingdom of Jesus rolling like a mighty stream over all those who were determined upon His

destruction. Glory be unto God! We fight and victory flies to congratulate our banner; ours is no desperate warfare, but a royal crusade in which every soldier is even now a priest and a king, and is on the way to the banqueting halls where men feast with God and Jesus forever and ever wears the fadeless diadem.

II. Time allows but a few words upon **THE ENCOURAGEMENT** to be gathered from the "must" which lies in the soul of the text.

1. The first encouragement is that if He *must* reign, then *all our enemies shall be subdued.* This text occurs in that memorable chapter concerning the resurrection, and it especially points to death. "He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet." "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Now, beloved believer, you are called to fight daily with sin, and here is your consolation—Jesus must reign! The Christ in you must bruise Satan under your feet! His atonement has forever destroyed the damning power of your sins; Christ reigns supreme on the milk-white throne of mercy as the pardoning God. Even so Jesus must reign over the active power of sin within your heart, for His death is the double death of sin; He has pierced its heart, and nailed its hands and feet—it shall not have dominion over you. Jesus, the King of kings, must hold His court in the castle yard of your heart, and all your powers and passions must do Him cheerful homage. Most sweet Prince, You shall wear Your royal robes in the coronation chamber of my affections! You shall reign over my quick imperious temper! He shall put His foot on the neck of my pride, and shall command my every thought and wish; where I cannot rule, Jesus can! Rebellious lusts acknowledge the spell of the cross, and indwelling sin falls like Dagon before that ark. Jesus has made us kings and priests, that we may reign over the triple monarchy of our nature— spirit, soul, and body, and that by our self-conquest *He* may be undisputed sovereign of the Isle

of Man. O you who are contending with your corruptions, push on in the war, for He must reign! Corruption is very strong, but Christ is stronger, and divine grace must reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. I think I hear you groaning, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Listen to the answer! It rings like a sweet Sabbath bell, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." You may die with Jesus, but you shall certainly rise with Him, for He will leave none of His members in the grave of their corruptions. This Joshua will slay all the Canaanites; He will drive out the old dragon from his throne with all his hellish crew and your entire manhood shall be a fair temple for the Holy Spirit's indwelling!

As long as we live in this world, and when we live again in the coming world, Jesus shall be the well-beloved Monarch of our hearts; this ought to put away all fears of death, for Christ *must* reign, *must* reign over death! When the last enemy appears in view, it shall only be an opportunity for new triumphs, when the Lord of life shall reveal Himself with renewed splendor; imagine not that death shall ever reign over Christ, ah no, in your departing moments you shall have most extraordinary grace, so that with joyful heart your lips shall sing, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" When your body shall have molded to ashes, Christ *must* reign, and every precious particle of that dust shall be attracted to its fellow—bone shall come to bone, and the flesh shall come upon the whole, and you shall live! Though worms destroy your body, yet in your flesh shall you see God, and so in your resurrection Jesus Christ shall reign! What a lamp is shining in the vaults of death! The day breaks upon all our darkness when we see that He *must* reign!

The next cool cup of encouragement springing from this well is this—*our efforts are, after all, not in vain.* If Christ *must* reign,

then every soldier who fights for Christ is contributing to the victory, and everyone who in any way advances the cause is working with sure and great results. You have not wasted those many silent prayers and those bitter tears. Those feeble efforts of yours which were so imperfect that you could scarcely hope them to be successful are all co-operating to produce a victory the shouts of which shall be heard all down the ages! You may but lay a single stone of the heavenly temple, but if it is done for Christ, it is a stone which will stand the fire, and your share of the building will remain to the last, while many a great one who has built a mass of wood, and hay, and stubble, shall see his labors all consumed in the day that tries every man's work. O my fellow soldiers, as we rest in this bivouac today waiting till another fight begins, let us be of good courage, and the Lord shall strengthen our hearts! Wait, I say, on the Lord, for the Lord is on our side! Our foes are tall as Goliath, and mighty as Pharaoh, and proud as Nebuchadnezzar, but in the name of God we will destroy them! In the name of Jesus we will again say Jehovah-Nissi, and setting up the banner we follow our Captain whose vesture is dipped in blood; He rides forth conquering and to conquer, and we follow Him to absolute victory! It is but a little while before we shall hear the shout, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

One sweet drop of comfort may be pressed from this text, *"He must reign"*—I must confess the sweetest comfort I have ever tasted. I know not why it is, but if I sink in spirit, (and I do full often), I very seldom get any cordial anywhere except from this one thing—that Christ *must* reign. "There," I have said in my soul, "then what becomes of me is of no consequence at all; if He will only take me into the royal galley, and chain me down to the oar, and let me tug and pull till I have no more life left, I will be satisfied if I may but row my Lord towards His throne, and have but the smallest share in

making Him great and glorious in the eyes of men and angels." What cares my heart for herself if she may but see Jesus set on high? It is a heaven to me to think that Christ is in heaven, and another heaven to believe that He will reign among men! If Christ is glorious, it is all the heaven I ask for! If He shall be King of kings, and Lord of lords, let me be nothing! If He shall but reign, and every tongue shall call Him blessed, it shall be bliss to me to know it! And if I may be but as one of the withered roses which lie in the path of His triumph, it shall be my paradise! Comrade in arms, as you and I in this ditch lie bleeding on the skirts of the battle, it is sweet to hear the shouts of victory! This is better than wine, better than healing, better than life. Look yonder, He rides with His crown upon His helmet! There He rides on His white horse in the very front of the fray! Can you not hear Him as He cries, "Onward!" and the enemy flees, and His forces march on to victory? You and I may lie down and die—what matters it, for the cause is safe, Jesus is King! Rest assured that Christ's victory is ours, and He will no more forget us than a woman will cease to think of the son of her womb. Oh, to put our heart into Christ's heart! To wish His wishes, and to love His loves! This is to enjoy peace like a river, and bliss like the waves of the sea; blessed thought for you who love Him! Treasure it. *"He must reign."*

How this ought to inspire all of you who grow downhearted about the cause of Christ. Some of my friends are frightened with that everlasting bugbear of Roman Catholicism. According to some we are going back to Rome, every mother's son of us, and old England is to be a rank popish country. Many in these days are fine hands at painting ugly pictures and believing them to be realities, but I believe my text, namely, that *Jesus must reign.* Therefore I do not fear the Pope or the devil; all the driveling priests of Rome with their Jesuitical tricks, shall find their master, for hell itself cannot shake that decree, *"He*

must reign." "Jesuits," you say, "are creeping in unawares." I know it! But behold, we shall tread upon the lion and the dragon—yes, the young lion and the dragon shall we trample under our feet. Do you not believe in the gospel as the power of God? Do you imagine that an unrighteous and unscriptural church establishment is needed as a bulwark to the gospel? Shall rotten wood defend the steel? Nonsense! Blow the establishment to a thousand pieces with the big guns of justice, and then the gospel will hold its own with all the greater ease. The gospel is quite able to take care of itself without your hierarchies, and tithes, and royal headships—you encumber the church with your bulwarks of wood, and hay, and stubble; you clog our David with the royal armor. My Lord Jesus Christ can do well enough in Ireland without Caesar or his pennies; he needs you not to drain wealth from those who serve another lord in order to uphold His cause; He hates your robberies which you call burnt-offerings; He has always taken care of Himself and His ministers, and will continue to do so. The ark of God of old was never captured till it was defended with carnal weapons, and even then, as soon as it was left alone, it rescued *itself.* When there was not a soldier to take care of it, when it was imprisoned in the temple of Dagon, Dagon fell, and Philistia was humbled! And so in England and Ireland, state alliance is bringing the gospel into jeopardy, but if that alliance can be broken which is the worst of ills, then the gospel in its grandeur of unaided might will confound all adversaries. Never be afraid—it does not become a Christian to fear; it is unmanly, unchristian, to talk as if Christ's cause were going to be trampled out like a spark under our feet. It cannot be! As enduring as the earth itself, and far more eternal; as everlasting as the throne of God, are the cross and honor and dignity of Christ. Let us feel this, for He *must* reign, and anticipated changes, instead of preventing Him from reigning, will help

Him to reign more universally; and the shaking off of old abuses, instead of being an injury to the cross of Christ, will give its glories ampler space, for He *must* reign, let men say what they will.

III. Once more, and I have done. There is an **ADMONITION** in the text, *"He must reign."*

My hearer, has He ever reigned in your heart? Where are you, my hearer? For I want you now. I must get you by the ear. "Jesus *must* reign." What have you to say to this? You have been opposing Him, have you? You are kicking against the pricks with naked feet; you are stumbling upon this stone, and you will be broken; and if the stone shall take to rolling down, like a massive rock, on you, it will grind you to powder. Persecutor, beware! You have gone upon a very very desperate errand; you are like a crawling worm that is fighting with the fire—you wiggle already in the heat of it; but if you continue long, what can you expect? You are like stubble contending with the fire-brand, or like chaff wrestling with the whirlwind. What can you do? O man, sheathe that sword! Take counsel while you are in the way, "whether you can, with 10,000 meet him who comes against you with twenty thousand." "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Another thought, if Jesus Christ *must* reign, then you who have never submitted yourselves to Him to accept Him as your Monarch, will find His reign as terrible as it is sure. He *will* reign over you, either by your own consent, or without it. He will either reign over you with that glorious glittering silver scepter of mercy in His hand, or He will rule over you with the heavy iron rod with which He will break you in pieces. Now, which is it to be? One or the other; His blood must be on you—either it must be on you to accuse and condemn you, as the Jews found out when they said, "His blood be on us, and on our

children"—or else it shall be on you to cleanse, to pardon, to save! Which shall it be? This morning, in the name of God I entreat you answer this question for your own good! Does Jesus reign over you this morning, or not? Oh, if He never should reign over you in this life, then, when you *die* you shall find that you cannot escape from His power! He will then reign over you while you are a prisoner, manacled in fetters of iron in the place of everlasting misery! He will reign over you, and you will be compelled to confess it, too, as you bite your iron bands and weep, and gnash your teeth in anger and in shame! He will reign over you absolutely, for you will not be able to lift a finger to contend against Him in the day when He comes to judge the quick and the dead—

"You sinners, seek His grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there."

May eternal mercy bring you, *now*, like loyal subjects, to bow before Jesus; may you be granted saving grace to give yourselves up to Him, trusting in Him, and in Him alone. That is the matter—to confide simply in Him is life eternal! There is the whole sum and substance of godliness. Then shall it be your joy to know and feel that *"He must reign."* The Lord bless you, and make you a blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

808 BRINGING THE KING BACK – II SAM. 19:10

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Evening, April 19th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Now therefore, why speak you not a word of bringing the king back?" — II Samuel 19:10

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — II Samuel 19:9-30]

THIS MORNING we were indulged with the Master's blessing while considering one of the most delightful subjects that can ever occupy the minds of God's creatures this side of heaven [Sermon #807, *Good News for Loyal Subjects.*] It was a celestial song, fitter for angels' harps than sinners' tongues; we sang the triumphs of the once rejected, but now exalted Son of man; we lingered lovingly over the guarantees of His sure and blessed kingdom, and fed with delight upon that short, sweet sentence, "He must reign." We tried to show that the throne of our Lord Christ is settled on a firm foundation, and that His ultimate and undisputed sovereignty over all things in heaven and earth and hell is a matter of divine decree, and will be asserted by the divine power in due time.

We laid the sheaf upon the threshing floor this morning— let us beat out the precious grain this evening. We showed you the pearl; now let us make it a golden setting of practical holiness! The Son of David is assuredly King, and you know it.

"Now therefore why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?"

Israel had revolted, and set up Absalom against his father—but when the rebel bands had been scattered and Absalom had been slain, the people thought of their old love; they remembered the days when David was the terror of the Philistines, and the champion of Israel! Their hearts smote them for their ingratitude to their valiant deliverer, and they said one to the other, "Now therefore why speak you not a word of bringing the king back?"

There are three sorts of people in this great throng, to each of whom this text might well be addressed. May none of my three arrows miss the mark! I shall endeavor to speak pointedly, and may the Holy Spirit make an effectual application of each word. May I but win a throne for Jesus in any *one* heart, and my joy shall be full!

I. First, my brothers and sisters, **MANY AMONG US HAVE LOST THE COMFORTABLE PRESENCE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**.

Some have long dwelt in the cold shade of suspended fellowship. Others, for a shorter period, have passed through the cloud; but surely the shortest period is all too long, and those who have lost fellowship must be anxiously pining after its restoration. Now to such as these, who see no longer the bright and morning star, we say, "Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?" My sorrowing brother, you have been mourning much concerning your present condition. Sitting down, perhaps, this very afternoon, and taking stock of your spiritual estate, you have felt yourself to be in an almost bankrupt condition, and you have written bitter things against yourself. Your barometer has been going down, down, down, for the last month or two—from rain to much rain and stormy; it now appears as if it never would ascend again. Upon a review

of the past, you observe that your prayers have not been as constant nor as fervent as they used to be; in reading the word, the promises have not been laid home to your heart as once they were, and in attending the means of grace, you have not so often said with Jacob, "Surely God was in this place." You are getting now into a sad condition, and all because your eyes have not lately seen the King in His beauty, neither has He brought you into His banqueting house, nor waved over you the banner of His love; you have been turning this forlorn plight over and over and over in your mind, and you have been anxiously searching for the cause of all this withering of your spirit. You can see that the cause does not lie in *Him* but in yourself; you perceive that your David has not forsaken *you*, but that you have forsaken *Him*, and set up some fair but false Absalom in His place. He who delivered you has been forgotten, and he who *deceived* you has been followed! Smooth-spoken sin has made you a traitor to your liege Lord; the luxuriant tresses of Absalom were nets to catch the shallow men of Israel, and Satan has taken care to find suitable snares for *you*. You know this, and you mourn it, and the temptation is to continue morbidly meditating upon the sin and its cause, and consequences until despair burns its horrible brand into the spirit. My business tonight is to remind you that all your lamentation over your folly will not of itself remove the disease. Your remedy does not lie within *you*, but beyond and above yourself! It is a good thing to discover where the mischief lies, and to lament it, yet the *real cure* for it does not lie in lamentation—it lies in seeking, again, the face of your Lord! "Now therefore why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?" The royal hand brings health and cure, healing is to be found nowhere else in earth or heaven. Go, then, to Jehovah-Rophi, The healing Lord! Oh, if you do but get Him back, your sorrow and sighing will flee away! Though everything else

should be dark and doleful, His presence is enough, by itself alone, to make a gala day in the heart!—

"Midst darkest shades if He appears,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And He my rising sun."

If your soul has been nipped with the frosts of a long and dreary winter, if the Sun of Righteousness does but manifest His meridian splendor, your summer will return at once; let the King come, and all His court will follow—all the graces display themselves where the Lord of grace is revealed. One word, then, to you who are under backslidings and declensions—play not with side issues, and secondary remedies, but go straightforward to the root of the matter. Turn your whole soul to your absent Master, and make this your one business—to bring the King back to His palace and throne in your heart!

Ah, I can well imagine what lies Satan will tell you. He will insinuate that you are no child of God, for if you were, your love would never grow so cold; he will whisper accusingly that never was any of the whole family of God so lifeless, so graceless as you are; he will say to you, "Your religion is a sham, your enjoyment is a delusion; you were never born-again—you felt a little excitement, and you thought you were converted, but you were not. Your repentance was not deep enough; your faith is not the faith of God's elect." He will tear up, one after another; all your comfortable experiences even as the wild boar out of the wood rends up the vines, till he will reduce your soul to a howling wilderness of doubt and fear. How can you best meet this roaring lion? Will you try by your own wit to answer this accuser of the brethren? Will you try to prove your experience to be right, and his insinuations to be false? If you

are wise, you will attempt nothing of the kind, for at that sport Satan can play better than you, and as fast as you set up your evidences he will knock them down again. There is a surer and safer method, and when I see you forgetting it, I inquire in the words of the text, "Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?" Why not tell the case to Jesus? *That* is the true answer to the adversary—answer him by your advocate. If you can regain the comfortable presence of Jesus, your evidences will all be seen in His light. Satan himself will not be able to disturb the conviction of your mind that you are a child of God, when your Lord again kisses you with the kisses of His lips, and you drink of His love which is better than wine.

I can readily conceive that your legal tendencies will suggest to you, "Now, having fallen into this condition, seeing that it is very doubtful whether you are saved or not, you should labor after salvation by being more zealous and more devout." Thus may you hear the voice of a deluding spirit, gendering unto bondage, crying out, "You must attend to religious observances and ordinances! You must mortify the flesh in this direction, and deny yourself in that, and then by degrees, you will come back to your old comfort and peace of mind." This all might be very good advice if it were not thrust into an improper place, and made to be a foundation for renewed confidence. To thrust out declension by a legal spirit is for Satan to cast out Satan, which cannot be! God will not have His child's face washed in the scalding water of the law. Let the child of God beware of being brought into legal servitude in which he will find himself wearily working for life, and slavishly toiling for salvation, for then he will be a mere slave, and will be ready to die in the wilderness like Hagar and her cast out son—instead of enjoying the liberty of the child of the promise who dwells forever in the Father's house. Always beware, dear friends, of any instruction or direction which would withdraw

you from the cross as the sole and simple ground of your comfort. Duties, I trust, you will never neglect; services and ordinances, I trust, will always be very precious to you; but when you have lost your comfort, you might as well search for fire beneath the ice as look for comfort in *duties,* and you might certainly as well turn over the dunghill and look for a diamond, as search within *yourself* for jewels of consolation. "Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?" for if you bring King Jesus back, He will be made of God unto you *wisdom*, *righteousness*, *sanctification*, and *redemption*; you shall find in Him all you need. As Charles Wesley puts it so sweetly in the hymn—

"You, O Christ, are all I need;
More than all in You I find."

If you would obtain all good things in one, seek to win Christ, and to be found in Him. Desponding one, your whole business lies with Jesus; you have nothing to do today with attainments and experiences—it is not even desirable to practice self-examinations while you are in despondency; these are to be attended to by-and-by, but just now, while the present stress of weather lasts, your one cry must be—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly!"

While your boat is tossed about at sea, it is very likely that she needs a new copper bottom, or the deck requires repair, or the rigging is out of repair, or the sails need overhauling, or 50 other things may be necessary; but if the wind is blowing great guns, and the vessel is drifting towards those white-crested breakers, the *first* business of the mariner is to make for the haven at once to avoid the hurricane; when he is all snug in

port, he can attend to hull and rigging, and all the odds and ends besides. So with you, child of God; one thing you must do, and I beseech you do it; do not be looking to this, or to that, or to the other out of a thousand things that may be amiss—steer straight for the cross of Christ which is the haven for distressed spirits! Fly at once to the wounds of Jesus, as the dove flies to her nest in the cleft of the rock; may the Eternal Spirit give you joy and peace through believing.

"Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?" Perhaps you reply, "We speak not a word of this *because we are afraid that the King may have forgotten us."* Oh, cruel thought, concerning so kind a friend! Hear His own words, "I am God; I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Your Lord forgotten you! Ah, you know what you *deserve*, but He will not treat you as your sins demand. Shall Christ forget His people for whom He shed His blood? He has said, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands." How can He forget what is written there? You have played the harlot, and gone away from your first husband, but He says, "Return, return, you backsliding children, for I am married unto you." You may forget the nuptial tie which binds you to your Lord, but He neither forgets nor doubts it, but plainly affirms, "I have espoused you unto Myself in faithfulness." And He declares that He hates putting away. Though we believe not, He abides faithful.

But you say, *"How shall I return to Him? I feel ashamed to come to Him yet again."* And well you may! But the best color you can wear upon your face, when you enter His presence, will be that crimson of holy shame. Remember that bad as you are, you are not now worse than when you first came to Him; you were then without a spark of divine grace, or love, or holiness; you were once an *enemy*, *dead* in trespasses and sins, but His great love loved you even then. You may well be ashamed, I say, and

yet I entreat you let not this shame keep you from coming just as you are to Him. Ho, you negligent believers, you lax professors, you lukewarm ones, Christ has not cast you away! This is His message to you—let me give it to you, it was first delivered to the church at Laodicea when it had declined into the same state as your own, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He is not gone! He waits at your door, and knocks at it, longing to enter. "If any man opens to Me, I will enter in and sup with him, and he with Me." This is the cure for your lukewarmness, and this cure awaits you now, for Jesus Christ is in this very house of prayer knocking at the gate of your heart! O let Him enter, and in a moment all that you have bewailed of coldness and of lethargy will disappear at His return!

"Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?" I hope the answer to that question is not that *you have forgotten Him*. Forgotten the man of Gethsemane, crimsoned with His own blood for you! Forgotten Him whose hands were pierced for you! Forgotten Him who bore the crown of thorns, and bowed His head, and gave up the ghost for you! Forgotten that faithful lover who ever since He ascended above the stars has never ceased to intercede for you, and such as you! Oh, shame, indeed! But you have not quite forgotten Him, I know you have not; perhaps, however, you have grown so dead in spirit that you hardly *care* about His company. What shall I say to you? Shall I remind you of—

> "Those peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
> How sweet their memory still"?

I bear my testimony tonight that there is no joy to be found in this entire world like that of sweet communion with Christ! I would barter all else there is of heaven for that! Indeed, that *is* heaven! As for the harps of gold, and the streets like unto

clear glass, and the songs of seraphs, and the shouts of the Redeemed; one could very well give all these up, counting them as a drop in a bucket, if we might forever live in fellowship and communion with Jesus. When it is our great privilege to press close to our Lord, and to feel that He loves us, and that we love Him, and to lean our head upon His bosom, *then* it is glory this side of Jordan! Do you not long for it? Have you forgotten the garden of nuts, and the beds of spices? O willful, wayward heart, have you forgotten the banqueting house, and the day when you came up from the wilderness leaning on your Beloved? You said then, "I will never forget You." Then your heart warbled to itself in words like these—

"O my soul, forget no more
The friend who all your misery bore;
Let every idol be forgot,
But, O my soul, forget Him not."

And now what are you doing to be so negligent of your Beloved? O fickle heart, are you not ashamed at your inconstancy? Content without your Lord! A spouse content without her husband! A child happy away from its father's face, and under its father's frown! Chide your hearts, my brothers and my sisters, if you know any joy apart from Jesus! I would gladly provoke you to a sacred jealousy; I would fill you with an insatiable hunger and thirst for your Beloved; I would not merely exhort you to speak a word to bring Him back, but I would persuade you to send up an incessant cry—

"When will You come unto me, Lord?
O come, my Lord, most dear!
Come near, come nearer, nearer still,
I'm blest when You are near."

Remember, the heavenly Lover will come; He forgives the past—He is ready to come to you *now*. Come to Him, dear brothers and sisters, just as you did at first; fall flat on your face before His dear cross, and then look up to His streaming wounds, and say, "Jesus, I rest in You." Give yourselves up to Him afresh; it is a good thing to renew your youth by renewing your fellowship. See at this season how the year has put on its new mantle of green. Mark how all animal and vegetable nature has been refreshed; will you not renew your youth like the eagle? Will you not begin again? I trust you will, and if so, the true way to revive is to speak a word concerning bringing the King back.

II. Secondly, and briefly. **MANY PROFESSORS DO VERY LITTLE TO BRING CHRIST BACK TO HIS KINGDOM IN THE WORLD**—and to these we have a message.

I do not think that on the whole, anybody could fairly describe us as being a lazy church, but there never was a hive of bees without there being at times a few drones to be turned out, and if when I am speaking tonight to the drones, any of you should feel that my rebuke comes rather sharply home, I am sure I shall be delighted, for it is my sincere desire to be personal. There are a number of Christians whose whole Christianity seems to lie in attending two services each Sunday, but do nothing for Jesus. Some of them think one attendance at worship quite enough for the Sabbath; they are such very easily satisfied people, that one meal in a week satisfies their spiritual appetite. It is an improvement, certainly, when we see others regular in coming twice, and some who drop in on weeknights to the lecture, but there are numbers who never attend the prayer meeting, and so deny the Lord Jesus even the cheap love-token of their prayers. Well, perhaps He is no great loser, for those who do not come to the prayer meeting are not the best of church members, but a great deal the worst, as a

rule. I speak not of those who are debarred lawfully—workers, or even masters whose business detains them, but there are persons who might come if they would, but forsake the assembling of themselves together. These miss the blessing, and deserve to do so, seeing that they deny the Lord even the poor aid of their prayers.

How many there are who do nothing for our King! They are not Sunday school teachers; they are not street preachers; they do not take a tract district; they are not subscribers, at least to any great extent, to anything! They have no objective that is dear to them in connection with the church. They are very glad to see all the work go on well—like a man on the top of the coach, they enjoy the riding, but they have no care to draw an ounce, no inclination to assist in any respect. Now, to such I say, if you are, indeed, Christians, "Why speak you not a word of bringing the King back?" Have you no desire whatever that Jesus Christ should reign among the sons of men? If you, as a Christian, have a right to be idle, every man has a right to be the same; and then where would be the exertions of the Christian church, and humanly speaking, where would be anything like the extension of Messiah's kingdom? God works by *instruments,* and those instruments are *men and women* who are themselves saved, and who being saved, are set to fulfill the loving duty of telling out the plan of salvation to others! And so have you tied up your tongue, and given up all idea of being of any service to the church of God? My dear brother; my dear sister, were you never then redeemed by blood? "Yes," you say, "I hope so." Why, then, you are not your own! On your own showing you are bought with a price, and how can you then live as though you were your own? My dear brother, my dear sister, do you owe Christ nothing? "Oh!" you tell me, "I owe him *everything."* Then, I beseech you, do not live as one who is devoid of gratitude! Selfishness in religion is detestable—that

selfishness which makes us think, "Well, if we get to heaven, that is all we need; we shall not worry ourselves about the concerns of the church, nor take upon ourselves any labor in connection with the Master's vineyard." Ah, but if your precious Redeemer had said, "Heaven is glorious, and I cannot have more honor than I possess already; I will not go to earth to toil and suffer to redeem the sons of men," then might you have had an excuse and an example in your selfishness and sloth. But since He loved not Himself, but gave Himself to suffer, bleed, and die; my brothers and sisters, I do entreat you be instant in season and out of season for your Master, that He may be glorified in you.

"Oh, I could not do much," says one. Then do what you can! No *one* flower makes a garden, but altogether the fair blossoms of spring create a paradise of beauty; let all the Lord's flowers contribute in their proportion to the beauty of the garden of the Lord. "But I am so unused to it." Then, my brother, my sister, that is a very powerful reason why you should do *twice* as much, so as to make up for your past idleness. "Oh, but I am afraid nothing would come of it." What has that to do with you? *God* has promised a blessing, and if the blessing should not come in your day, yet if you have done what the Master bade you, you will not be blamed for lack of success. "Sir," asks another, "will you give me some work to do?" No, I will not, for if you are good for anything, you will find it for yourself; in such a place as London, for people to go to their minister to know what they are to do seems to me to be the height of absurdity! What work can you do? Put your hand out and begin, for there is plenty within reach; your own unconverted child, whose face you kiss tonight, is to be the first objective of your labors; begin to educate your family of Christ, and pray for the salvation of your own households. What spheres you may find in the neighborhoods in which you dwell!

They swarm with immortal souls, and abound in sin! The fields are white unto the harvest; some of you may not be able to work by using your tongue, then use your purses—use whatever gift God has given you, only do it! Never let it be said that you do not "speak a word of bringing the King back."

Oh, when the King comes to His own, how happy shall they be who fought His battles! I think I see Him riding through the streets of this glad world with great acclaim! The angels are in mighty squadrons; ten thousand times ten thousand ranged on either side, and all men are bowing before Him, scattering His path with roses, and crying, "Hosanna, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" Oh, it will be such satisfaction, then, to feel, "I helped to bring that chariot forth! I helped to subdue the kingdom unto Him!" But where will you go; where will you hide your heads, you who have done nothing at all for Him? You cannot, you dare not in your consciences share in the splendor of His triumph because you took no part in the rigor of His campaigns—you cannot participate in His crown because you did not share in His cross!

III. Thirdly, and lastly. There is a large class here, I fear, a sadly large class **WHO ARE REBELLIOUS SUBJECTS OF THIS KING.**

Oh, how I wish they would say a word, if it were only such a word as the poor publican said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," for such a word as that would bring the King into their hearts! O you who do not love Christ, listen to me a minute; you are God's creatures; God has a *right* to your services; it is God's *power* that keeps the breath in your nostrils—you are, therefore, obliged to God for your very existence! You would not like it if your child never expressed its obligations to you; why do you not admit your obligations to your Father? "The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib," but you do not know, and you have lived all these years without

considering. Is it not unjust? Does not conscience tell you that you do wrong to rebel against the God who made you? Christ is your lawful King, and you are a rebel against Him tonight; He is so good a King; He is no tyrant! His yoke is easy, and His burden is light, and yet you will not have Him. If He was a despot, and made you wretched, I could excuse your revolt, but Immanuel is all love, and they who serve Him are happy; O why then do you revolt more and more, and go astray and break His blessed bands, and resists His sweet love?

Let me reason with you. You are God's, and you confess it; He supplies you with life, and you acknowledge it; He is a good God, and you will not deny it. O why then do you not seek to make Him your King? Why do you not yield yourselves up to Him? Why do you not give your hearts to His service, and be His forever?

Perhaps you have been like Shimei, who cursed King David, and you are afraid that Jesus will never forgive you; but David forgave Shimei, and Jesus is ready to forgive you! He delights in His mercy! I do believe that the harps of heaven never give to Christ such happiness as He has when He forgives the ungodly, and says, "Your sins are forgiven; go in peace." Then it is that He performs the darling action of His life, that which is nearest and dearest to His soul. Oh it is you who are hard to confess, it is not Christ who is hard to forgive! It is your own heart that is hard towards Him, not His heart that is hard towards you; He is ready to receive you, young woman, and *now*. He is ready to receive you, grayheaded offender, and to receive you *now*. "He who comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Never has He cast out any, and never will He! Come and try Him! O that you would come and try Him now! Why do you not speak a word of bringing Him back, when He is so willing to come back, and to forget the past, and to abide with you forever?

Perhaps you say, "I would gladly have Jesus Christ in my heart to save me; I would gladly trust Him and be His, but how am I to get Him *back?"* There is nothing for you to do whatever—

"All the doing was completed,
Long, long ago."

You have only to accept what Christ has finished; if you will but trust Christ, you are His. Now see, I cast myself with all my weight, and lean upon this rail not fearing that I shall fall. Do just so with Christ; lean wholly on Him! If you do so, heaven and earth may pass away, but His promise to you shall never pass away or fail! Why do you not speak a word of bringing the King back again?

Hasten to your chamber; kneel by that bedside and confess your sins; tell Him that you have lived all these years a stranger to Him; tell Him that you have often choked conscience, and stifled the admonitions of His Spirit; ask Him to forgive you, for you bemoan your offenses, and then look to Him and see all the bitter griefs and horrid pangs which He endured upon the bloody tree, and say, "I do believe that there is merit enough in what Jesus suffered to put away my sin. It needs not that I should die, for Jesus died in the sinner's place as a full vindication of divine justice, and on His atonement I fix my trust."

I trust that some of you may speak a word to bring the King back. Oh, I have watched some of you with a tender interest—now hoping and then fearing: O when shall the case be decided and the question settled forever? I sometimes think I know a great deal about you. As I stand in this watchtower and look down, there is a curious kind of telegraphing that goes on between me and some of you; for I have looked at you, and

you have looked at me, and I have read the signals which your eyes have given me, and I know that you have been almost persuaded, but you cannot decide for the Lord and His service. With some of you it is fear that keeps you back. You still think it too good to be true that such great offenders as you are should be forgiven. Jesus is a great God, and a great Savior; O great sinner, He is just the Redeemer that can save you; come, then, and rely upon Him. Others of you are held back by temptations from evil friends; you get outside the Tabernacle, and somebody meets you who chats and laughs away all impressions. Others of you, in the week, go into bad society, and the devil ensnares you. O that the snare might be broken, and that you might escape! By the sweet persuasions of the Holy Spirit, I beseech you decide for Christ tonight! May His eternal Spirit compel you to open your heart's doors to Jesus, and your heart being once given to Him, your state is secure—

"I know that safe with Him remains,
Protected by His power,
What I've committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour.
Then will He acknowledge my worthless name
Before His Father's face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place."

809 THE APPROACHABLENESS OF JESUS – LUKE 15:1

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 3rd, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him." — Luke 15:1

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Hebrews 4:14-16; 5]

THE MOST DEPRAVED AND DESPISED classes of society formed an inner ring of hearers around our Lord. I gather from this that He was a most approachable person, that He was not of repulsive manners, but that He courted human confidence and was willing that men should commune with Him.

Upon that one thought I shall enlarge, this evening, and may the Holy Spirit make it a loadstone to draw many hearts to Jesus. Eastern monarchs affected great seclusion, and were liable to surround themselves with impassable barriers of state. It was very difficult for even their most loyal subjects to approach them. You remember the case of Esther, who, though the monarch was her *husband*, yet went with her life in her hands when she ventured to present herself before King Ahasuerus, for there was a commandment that none should come unto the king except they were called—at peril of their lives. It is not so with the King of kings. His court is far more splendid; His person is far more worshipful, and you may draw

near to Him at all times without hindrance. He has set no men-at-arms around His palace gate; the door of His house of mercy is set wide open; over the lintel of His palace gate is written, "For everyone who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened."

Even in our own days great men are not readily to be seen; there are so many back stairs to be climbed before you can reach the official who might have helped you, so many subordinates to be parleyed with, and servants to be passed by, that there is no coming at your object. The good men may be affable enough themselves, but they remind us of the old Russian fable of the hospitable householder in a village who was willing enough to help all the poor who came to his door, but he kept so many big dogs loose in his yard that nobody was able to get up to the threshold, and therefore his personal affability was of no service to the wanderers. It is not so with our Master. Though He is greater than the greatest, and higher than the highest, He has been pleased to put out of the way everything which might keep the sinner from entering into His halls of gracious entertainment. From His lips we hear no threats against intrusion, but hundreds of invitations to the nearest and dearest intimacy; Jesus is to be approached, not now and then, but at all times, and not by some favored few, but by all in whose hearts His Holy Spirit has enkindled the desire to enter into His secret Presence.

The philosophical teachers of our Lord's time affected very great seclusion; they considered their teachings to be so profound and eclectic that they were not to be uttered in the hearing of the common multitude. "Far from here, you profane," was their scornful motto. Like Simon Stylites, they stood upon a lofty pillar of their fancied self-conceit, and dropped now and then a stray thought upon the vulgar herd beneath, but they did not condescend to talk familiarly with

them, considering it to be a dishonor to their philosophy to communicate it to the multitude. One of the greatest philosophers wrote over his door, "Let no one who is ignorant of geometry enter here." But our Lord, compared with whom all the wise men are but *fools*, who is, in fact, the wisdom of God, never drove away a sinner because of his ignorance; He never refused a seeker because he was not yet initiated, and had not any thirsty spirit to be chased away from the crystal spring of divine truth. His every word was a diamond, and His lips dropped pearls; and He was never more at home than when speaking to the common people, and teaching them concerning the kingdom of God.

You may thus contrast and compare our Lord's gentle manners with those of kings, and nobles, and sages—but you shall find none to equal Him in condescending tenderness. To this attractive quality of our Lord I intend, this evening, as God shall help me, to ask your earnest attention. First, *let us prove it;* secondly, *illustrate it;* and, thirdly, *enforce or improve it.*

I. First, let us **prove the approachableness of Christ**, though it really needs no proof, for it is a fact which lies upon the surface of His life.

1. You may see it conspicuously *in His offices.* Those offices are too many for us to take them all tonight. We will just cull a handful, say three. Our Lord Jesus is said to be the *Mediator* between God and man. Now, observe that the office of Mediator implies at once that He should be approachable. A daysman, as Job says, is one who can put his hand upon both—but if Jesus will not familiarly put His hand on man, certainly He is no daysman between God and man! A mediator is not a mediator of *one*— he must be akin to both the parties between whom he mediates. If Jesus Christ shall be a perfect Mediator between God and man, He must be able to come to God so near that God shall call Him His fellow, and then He must

approach to man so closely that He shall not be ashamed to call him brother. This is precisely the case with our Lord. Do think about this, you who are afraid of Jesus; He is a Mediator, and as a Mediator you may come to Him. Jacob's ladder reached from earth to heaven, but if he had cut away half-a-dozen of the bottom rungs, what would have been the good of it? Who could ascend by it into the hill of the Lord? Jesus Christ is the great conjunction between earth and heaven, but if He will not touch the poor mortal man who comes to Him, why then, of what service is He to the sons of men? You need a Mediator between your soul and God—you must not think of coming to God without a Mediator, but you do not need any mediator between yourselves and Christ. There is a preparation for coming to God—you must not come to God without a perfect righteousness, but you may come to Jesus without any preparation and without any righteousness, because as Mediator He has in Himself all the righteousness and fitness that you require—and is ready to bestow them upon you! You may come boldly to Him even *now*—He waits to reconcile you unto God by His blood.

Another of His offices is that *of priest*. That word *"priest"* has come to smell very badly nowadays, but for all that it is a very sweet word as we find it in Holy Scripture. The word "priest" does not mean a gaudily-dressed pretender who stands apart from other worshippers within the gate, two steps higher than the rest of the people, and professes to have power to dispense pardon for human sin, and I know not what beside. The true priest was truly the brother of all the people; there was no man in the whole camp so brotherly as Aaron. So much were Aaron and the priests who succeeded him the first points of contact with men on God's behalf, that when a leper had become too unclean for anybody else to draw near to him, the last man who touched him was the priest. The house might be

leprous, but the priest talked with him and examined him, the last of Israel's tribes who might be familiar with the wretched outcast. And if afterwards that diseased man was cured, the first person who touched him must be a priest. "Go, show yourself to the priest," was the command to every recovering leper, and until the priest had entered into fellowship with him, and had given him a certificate of health, he could not be received into the Jewish camp. The priest was the true brother of the people; he was chosen from among themselves; he was at all times to be approached; he lived in their midst, in the very center of the camp, ready to make intercession for the sinful and the sorrowful. So is it with our Lord. I read just now, in your hearing, that He can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and that He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Surely you will never doubt that if Jesus perfectly sustains the office of priest, as He certainly does, He must be the most approachable of beings—approachable by the poor sinner who has given himself up to despair, whom only a sacrifice can save. He must be approachable by the foul harlot who is put outside the camp, whom only the blood can cleanse. He must be approachable by the miserable thief who has to suffer the punishment of his crimes, whom only the great High Priest can absolve. No other man may care to touch you, O trembling outcast, but Jesus will! You may be separated from all of humankind, justly and righteously by your iniquities, but you are not separated from that great Friend of sinners who at this very time is willing that publicans and sinners should draw near unto Him.

As a third office let me mention that *the Lord Jesus is our Savior;* but I see not how He can be a Savior unless He can be approached by those who need to be saved. The priest and the Levite passed by on the other side when the bleeding man lay in the road to Jericho; they were not saviors and could not be.

But he was the savior who came to know where the man was, stooped over him, and took wine and oil, and poured them into the gaping fissures of his wounds. He was the savior who lifted him up with tender love, and set him on his own beast, and led him to the inn. He was the true savior and O sinner, Jesus Christ will come just where you are, and your wounds of sin, even though they are putrid, shall not drive Him away from you! His love shall overcome the nauseating offensiveness of your iniquity, for He is able and willing to save such as you are! I might mention many other of the offices of Christ, but these three will suffice. Certainly if the Spirit blesses them, you will be led to see that Jesus is not hard to reach.

2. Consider a few of His *names and titles*. Frequently Jesus is called the *"Lamb."* Blessed name! I do not suppose there is anyone here who was ever afraid of a lamb! That little girl yonder, if she saw a lamb, would not be frightened. Every child seems almost instinctively to long to put its hand on the head of a lamb; O that you might come and put *your* hand on the head of Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world—

"Oh see how Jesus trusts Himself
Unto our childish love,
As though by His free ways with us
Our earnestness to prove!
His sacred name a common word
On earth He loves to hear;
There is no majesty in Him
Which love may not come near."

Again, you find Him called a *Shepherd;* no one is afraid of a shepherd. If you were traveling in the East, and you saw Bedouins or Turkish soldiery in the distance, you might be

alarmed, but if someone said, "Oh, it is only a few shepherds," you would not be afraid of them. The sheep are not at all timid when near the shepherd. O poor wandering sheep, you perhaps have come to be afraid of Christ, but there is no reason why you should be, for this heavenly Shepherd says, "I will seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."—

"See Israel's gentle Shepherd stands
With all engaging charms."

Timid, foolish, and wandering though you may be, there is nothing in the good Shepherd to drive you away from Him, but everything to entice you to come to Him. Then, again, He is called our *Brother,* and one always feels that he may approach his brother! I have no thought of trouble or distress which I would hesitate to communicate to my brother, here, for he is good and kind. I do not think I could be in any trouble which I should not expect him to do his best to help me out of; I never feel that there is any distance between him and me, nor do you, I hope, feel so with regard to your brothers. Even so is it with this brother born for adversity. Believer, how is it that you are sometimes so backward and so cold towards Jesus? Christ is approachable—

"The light of love is round His feet,
His paths are never dim;
And He comes near to us when we
Dare not come near to Him."

You need not think that your troubles are too trifling to bring to Him; He has an open ear for the little daily vexations of life; brothers and sisters, you can come to the good elder

Brother at all hours—and when He blames you for coming, let me know. He is called, too, a *Friend;* but He would be a very unfriendly friend who could not be approached by those He professed to love! If my friend puts a hedge around himself, and holds himself so very dignified that I may not speak with him, I would rather be without his friendship; but if he is a genuine friend, and I stand at his door knocking, he will say, "Come in, and welcome; what can I do for you?" Such a friend is Jesus Christ; He is to be met with by all needy, seeking hearts.

3. There is room enough for enlargement here, but I have no time to say more, therefore I will give you another plea. *Remember His person.* The person of our Lord Jesus Christ proclaims this truth with a trumpet voice. I say His *person*, because He is Man, born of woman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ is God, but if He was God only, you might well stand at a distance and shudder at the splendor of His Majesty. But He is *man* as well as God, and so it comes to pass, as Dr. Watts puts it—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."

When I see Christ in the manger where the horned ox fed, or hanging on a woman's breast, or obedient to His parents, or "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," a poor man without a place where to lay His head, then I feel that I can freely come to Him. Think of Him as being precisely such as

you are, in all and everything except *sin,* and then you will never have a thought that He will chide you for drawing near, or drive you away when you venture to supplicate Him. But I want especially to say to you that if you could but see my Master's person as He was when here on earth, you would have henceforth and forever the thought that you might not come to Him expelled from your mind. I know not what may have been His beauties, or what may have been the appearance of His lovely countenance—but of this I am persuaded, that if He could but come here tonight, and I could vacate this platform for Him whose shoelace I am not worthy to unloose, you who groan under a sense of unworthiness would not run away! If Moses stood here with his flaming countenance, you would shade your eyes, and ask that if you must look upon him he might wear a veil. But if Christ were here, oh, how you longing, seeking ones would gaze upon Him! There would be no drooping of the eyelids, no covering of the face, no alarm, no anguish—His face is too sweet for that! And if the Master should walk down the aisles, the most timid of you would long to touch the hem of His garment, and to kiss the floor where He had set His feet. I know you would not fear to look into that face! And then that voice! How you would be charmed, you poor trembling seekers, if you heard Him say, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." You would discover such meekness and lowliness in Him that you would not *think* of starting back; oh, if your eyes could but see Him I feel persuaded that, graciously drawn by His charms, your hearts would hasten to Him! Well, believer, come to Him, come to Him! Come close to Him! Come with your troubles, and tell Him all about them. Come with your sins, and ask to have them washed away anew—

"Let us be simple with Him, then,
Not backward, stiff, or cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."

And you, poor trembling sinner, come to Him! Come to Him *now*, for He has said, "He who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Oh, if your eyes were opened to behold Him, you would perceive that the glory of His person lies not in the splendor which *repels*, but in the majesty which divinely *attracts!*

4. If this suffices not, *let me here remind you of the language of Christ.* He proclaims His approachability in such words as these, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You rough-handed sons of toil, you smiths and carpenters, you plowers and diggers, come unto Me, yes, come all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And again, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." He *invites* men to come! He *pleads* with them to come! And when they will not come, He gently upbraids them with such words as these, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." And, again, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not." It is not *"I* would not," but, *"you* would not." Why, the whole of Scripture in its invitations may be said to be the language of Christ, and there you find loving, pleading words of this kind, "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." All our blessed

Lord's sermons were so many loving calls to poor aching hearts to come and find what they needed in Him. I pray that the Holy Spirit may give an effectual call to many of you tonight; it would gladden the heart of the Redeemer in the skies if you would come to Him for salvation! You may come since there is no barrier between you and the Savior of men. What is it that keeps you back? I repeat it with tears, what is it that keeps you back?

5. The old proverb truly says that, "actions speak louder than words," and therefore let us review the general ways and manners of the Redeemer. You may gather that He is the most approachable of persons *from the actions of His life.* He was always very busy, and busy about the most important of matters, and yet He never shut the door in the face of any applicant. Her Majesty's cabinet have to discuss most important political matters just now, but compared with the work which filled the Savior's hands and heart, their discussions are mere trifles. Our Master might well have claimed seclusion but He did not. He *sought* it but He found none, save only at midnight, when He watched and prayed. No sort of appeal for audience did Jesus frown upon; there were certain mothers in the land, poor simple-minded women, and they took it into their heads one day that they would like to have the Master's hands put upon the heads of their little ones. So they came, bringing their boys and girls; but some of the disciples said, "The Master must not be disturbed by children; go your ways, and take your children back." But what said Jesus? How different from His followers! He rebuked their harshness, and said, "Allow the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." You see, He is a *child's* friend! Dear young people, think of that! Jesus does not drive you away! Though He is so great and glorious that all the angels of God worship Him, yet He stoops to hear the prayers and praises of little children! Seek Him now, for

those who seek Him early shall find Him. Let me tell you another story. There was a woman in the city who was a sinner. You know the meaning, the dark sad meaning of that title in her case; I need not explain that. Poor soul! Her sin had caused her to be despised and shunned by everyone, but she had been forgiven, and in gratitude she poured the precious ointment on her beloved Savior's feet, and then wiped them with the hairs of her head. And when the Pharisee Simon would have her rebuked, the loving Master said, "She loves much because she has had much forgiven." He is approachable by all, then, even by the worst! Even the harlot need not fear to draw near to Him—His touch can make her pure. I have noted one thing in Christ's life, and noted it with delight; our Lord was always *preaching*, and He often grew weary, as we do, and therefore He needed a little retirement, but the multitude came breaking in upon His solitude, following Him on foot when He had sailed away to escape them. This was troublesome, and to us it would have been irritating, yet He never uttered an angry, fretful syllable. There was no rest for Him because of the eager crowd, but did He ever say, "How these people tease Me; how they worry Me"? No, never! His big heart made Him forget Himself; He was approachable to all at all hours—even his meals were disturbed, but he was gentle towards those thoughtless intruders. Not once was He harsh and repulsive. His whole life proves the truth of the prophecy, "The bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench." He graciously receives the weak and the feeble ones who come to Him, and sends none away empty.

6. But, if you need the crowning argument, look yonder. The man who has lived a life of service at last dies a felon's death! Look upon His head girt with the crown of thorns! Mark well His cheeks from where they have plucked off the hair! See the spit from those scornful mouths staining His marred

countenance! Mark the crimson rivers which are flowing from His back where they have scourged Him! See His hands and His feet which are pierced with the nails, and from which rivers of blood are flowing! Look to that face so full of anguish! Listen to His cry, "I thirst, I thirst"! And as you see Him there dying, can you think that He will spurn the seeker? As you see Him turn His head and say to the dying thief by His side, "Today shall you be with Me in paradise." You dare not belie Him so much as to deem that *you* may not come to Him! You will outrage your reason if you start back from Jesus crucified! The cross of Christ should be the hope, the anchor of faith! You may come, sinner—black, vile, hellish sinner—you may come and have life even as the dying thief had it when he said, "Lord, remember me."—

"There is life in a look at the crucified One!"

Surely you need not be afraid to come to Him who went to Calvary for sinners. Why linger? Why hesitate? Why those blushes, sobs, and tears?—

"Why are you afraid to come,
And tell Him all your case?
He will not pronounce your doom,
Nor frown you from your face.
Will you fear Immanuel?
Or dread the Lamb of God,
Who, to save your soul from hell,
Has shed His precious blood?"

Did I hear a whisper? Did anybody say that Christ is now in heaven, and that He may have changed? Ah, groundless insinuation! Do you know what He is doing in heaven at this

moment? He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins; what a help that is to those who are coming to Him! This repentance is the greatest need of coming sinners, and He from the skies supplies it! Moreover, "He ever lives to make intercession for us." His occupation in the skies is to plead for those sinners whom He redeemed with His blood, and therefore He is able to save them unto the uttermost. Since He is the intercessor for souls, there is no reason why you should start back, but every reason why you should boldly come to the throne of the heavenly grace, because you have a High Priest who is passed into the heavens—

"Compelled by bleeding love,
You wandering sheep draw near!
Christ calls you from above—
His charming accents hear!
Let whoever will, now come,
In mercy's breast there still is room."

Here I leave this part of the subject. Some of you little know how heavily this sermon is hanging on my mind; I preach my very soul to you this night; I wish I knew how to preach so as to win some of you for my Lord this evening. I should be glad to go even to the school of affliction if I might learn to preach more successfully, but I can do no more. May the Eternal Spirit, in answer to the prayers of His people, which I hope are going up now, be pleased to make you feel the sweet attractions of the cross of Christ, and may you come to Him so that it may be said again tonight, "Then drew near unto Him publicans and sinners."

II. I now shall proceed, with as great brevity as I can command, **to illustrate this great truth**.

I illustrate it, in the first place*, by the way which Christ opens up for sinners to Himself*. What is the way for a sinner to come to Christ? It is simply this—the sinner, feeling his need of a Savior, trusts himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the perplexity of my boyhood, but it is so simple now. When I was told to go to Christ, I thought, "Yes, if I knew where He was, I would go to Him; no matter how I wearied myself I would trudge on till I found Him." I never could understand how I could get to Christ till I understood that it is a *mental* coming, a *spiritual* coming, a coming with the *mind*. The coming to Jesus which saves the soul is a simple *reliance* upon Him, and if tonight, being sensible of your guilt, you will rely upon the atoning blood of Jesus, you have come to Him, and you are saved! Is He not, then, approachable, indeed, if there is so simple a way of coming? There are no good works, ceremonies, or experiences demanded—a child-like faith is the royal road to Jesus!

This truth of God is further illustrated by *the help which He gives to coming sinners in order to bring them near to Himself*. He it is who first makes them coming sinners; it is His Eternal Spirit who draws them unto Himself; they would not come to Him of themselves. They are without desires towards Him, but it is His work to cast secret silken cords around their hearts which He draws with His strong hands, and brings them near to Himself. Depend upon it; He will never refuse those whom He Himself draws by His Spirit! Rest assured He will never shut the door in the face of any soul that comes to feed at the gospel banquet, moved to approach by the power of His love. He said once, "Compel them to come in," but He never said, "Shut the door in their faces and bolt them out."

I might further illustrate this to the children of God, *by reminding you of the way in which you now commune with your Lord*. How easy it is for you to reach His ear and His heart! A prayer, a sigh, a tear, a groan will admit you into the King's chambers.

You may be in a very sad frame of mind, but when you come to Him, how soon He makes your soul like the chariots of Amminadab; dark may be your midnight, but as soon as you draw near to Him your night is over. "He gives liberally, and upbraids not." While He acts thus with you, the sinner may very well believe that He will receive him too.

The approachableness of Christ may also be seen in the fact *of His receiving the poor offerings of His people.* The very holiest deeds which you and I can do for Christ are poor and faulty at the best. As I sat studying at my table last night, there was before me a little withered flower, a sprig of wallflower which has been lying for some weeks on my table. It comes from a very, very poor child of God, many miles away, who gets a blessing from reading my sermons. She has nothing in the world besides to give me, but she sends me this flower, and I value it because it is a token of Christian affection and gratitude. So is it with our Master; the very best sermons that we preach, and the largest contributions we give to His treasury are only just like that poor little withered wallflower, but the Master puts our service in His bosom and keeps it there, and thinks much of it because He loves us. Does not that prove how generous, how condescending, how tender He must be? Believe Him to be so, you fearful souls, and come to Him!

The ordinances wear upon their forefront the impress of an ever approachable Savior. Baptism in outward type sets forth our fellowship with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection—what can be nearer than this? The Lord's Supper in visible symbol invites us to eat His flesh and drink His blood: this reveals to us most clearly how welcome we are to the most intimate communion with Jesus. The heaven of heavens shall afford us yet another illustration. There are tens of thousands now in the skies who came to Jesus just as they were, in all the filth and *carelessness* of the lost estate, and He received every one

of them into His heart of love and arms of power. There are many thousands on earth, there are some thousands now in this Tabernacle, who can testify that they have found Jesus to be a very tender and generous friend. Now, if He has received us, why should He not receive you? Be encouraged to believe that inasmuch as He has received others He has open arms for you also.

Let me joyfully remind you that *Jesus never has rejected a seeking sinner.* There is not to be found in all the kingdoms of the universe a single instance of a sincere seeker after Christ being cast away, and there never shall be, for He has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain," but He has said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." beloved, if there had been a single soul cast away, we should have known of it by now! It is 1868 years now, and if a solitary penitent had been rejected, we should have heard of it before now, for I will tell you of one who would have spread it abroad, and that is Satan! If he could get a single instance of a soul who had repented and trusted Christ, but found that Christ would have nothing to do with him, it would be a standing scandal against the cross which Satan would delight to publish! I know, poor sinners, what the devil will tell you when you are coming to Christ—he will describe Jesus as a hard Master, but you tell him he is a liar from the beginning, and a murderer, and that he is trying to murder your soul by making you swallow his poisonous lies!

III. In the third place, we come **to enforce this truth**, or, as the old Puritans used to say, improve it.

The first enforcement I give is this: let those of us who are working for the Master in soul-winning, *try to be like Christ in this matter,* and not be as some are apt to be, proud, stuck-up, distant, or formal. Oh, dear, dear! The lofty ministerial airs that one has seen assumed by men who ought to have been meek and lowly!

What a grand set of men some of the preachers of the past age thought themselves to be! I trust those who played the archbishop have nearly all gone to heaven, but a few linger among us who use little grace and much starch; the grand divines never shook hands with anybody, except, indeed, with the deacons and a little knot of evidently superior persons. Among Dissenters it was almost as bad as it is in most church congregations where you feel that the good man, by his manner, is always saying, "I hope you know who I am, sir; I am the rector of the parish." Now, all that kind of stuck-upishness is altogether wrong; no man can do good in that way, and no good at all comes of assuming superiority and distance; the best teacher for boys is the man who can make himself a boy, and the best teacher for girls is the woman who can make herself a girl among girls.

I often regret that I have so large a congregation. You will say, "Why?" Why, when I had a smaller congregation at Park Street, there were too many even then, but I did get a shake of the hand sometimes; but now there are so many of you that I scarcely know you, good memory as I have, and I seldom have the pleasure of shaking hands with you—I wish I did. If there is anybody in the wide world whose good I wish to promote, it is yours! Therefore I wish to be at home with you, and if ever I should affect the airs of a great man, and set myself above you all—and separate myself by proud manners from your sympathy—I hope the Lord will take me down and make me right again! We may expect souls to be saved when we do as Christ did, namely, get publicans and sinners to draw near to us. Now, that is a practical point which, though you have smiled about it, will not I hope be forgotten by you.

There is this to be said to you who are unconverted—if Jesus Christ is so approachable, oh, *how I wish, how I wish that you would approach Him.* There are no bolts upon His doors, no

barred iron gates to pass, no big dogs to keep you back. If Christ is so approachable by all needy ones, then needy one, come, and welcome! Come just now! What is it that keeps you back? You think that you do not *feel* your need enough, or that you are not *fit* to come—both of which suspicions are self-righteousness in different shapes. O that you did but know your need of Jesus, in order to be able even to do as much as feel your need; you are a poor, miserable bankrupt before God, and Christ alone can enrich you! Do not talk of fitness; there is no such thing—

"All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him:
This He gives you;
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam."

Come, then. There is such mercy to be had; there is such a hell to be escaped from; there is such a heaven to be opened for you; delay not, but believe at once. Come, come, come!—

"Come, and welcome!
Come, and welcome, sinner, come!"

I stand at mercy's door tonight, and say to every passerby in the name of the Master, "My oxen and fatlings are killed; come, come, come to the supper!" O that you would come this very night! Some of us are coming to the Lord's Table to celebrate His love because we have first come to Him. I do not ask you who are not saved to come to that table—you ought *not* to come; you must first come to *Jesus,* and then you may come to this ordinance. Meanwhile, the best thing you can do is to come to Christ. And let me ask you to remember this that in proportion as Christ is accessible, so your guilt will be

increased if you do not come to Him! If it is easy to come to Him, what excuse can there be for you if you refuse to accept Him? I have tried to tell you what the way of salvation is; if I knew how to use better language, or even coarser language, if that would suit you, it should be alike to me if I might but touch your consciences, break your hearts, and bring you to Christ, but I declare before you that if you will not come to my Master I can do no more; I shall be clear of your blood at the last, and in the Day of Judgment your ruin must be upon your own heads. But let it not be so! Jesus bids you come! O you needy ones—let your need impel you to come at once that you may find eternal Life in Him!

The last word is—if Jesus is such a Savior as we have described Him, *let saints and sinners join to praise Him.* How marvelous that our dear Lord should be so condescending to us unworthy ones as to come all the way from heaven to earth for us! Oh, matchless love that made Him stoop to grief and death! Oh, unspeakable condescension, to come thus to poor sinners' hearts bearing mercies in both His hands, and freely giving them to undeserving rebels! For this unspeakable grace let us praise Him! You who are coming to His table, draw near with praises in your mouths. Come praising the condescending love in which you have participated, and which has saved you from eternal death! Even you who sit as spectators, I do trust will have your minds filled with grateful thoughts—

"Jesus sits on Zion's hill
He receives poor sinners still."

Blessed be His name, world without end!

810 THE FAITHFULNESS OF JESUS – JOHN 13:1

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 10th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." — John 13:1

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — John 13:1-17]

WE SHALL CONSIDER these words first in their evident relation to the apostles, and those who were the companions of Jesus during His sojourn on earth. Afterwards we shall take them in their broader significance as relating to all the Lord's own whom He loves, and will love even to the end.

"Having loved His own." Those four words are a brief but complete summary of the Savior's conduct towards His disciples. He *always* loved them. There was never a single action or word which was contrary to the rule of love. He loved them with a love of *pity* when He saw them in their lost estate, and He called them out of it to be His disciples; touched with a feeling of their infirmities He loved them with a tender and prudent affection, and sought to train and educate them, so that after His departure they might be good soldiers of His cross; He loved them with a love of *complacency* as He walked and talked with them, and found solace in their company. Even when He rebuked them He loved them. He subjected them to many trials—for His sake they renounced all that they had; they

shared His daily cross-bearing and hourly persecution, but love reigned supreme and undiminished in it all. On Tabor or in Gethsemane He loved His own. Alone, or in the crowd, His heart was true to them; in life and in death His affection failed not; He "loved His own which were in the world." It is a *multum in parvo,* a condensed life of Christ, a miniature of Jesus the lover of souls. As you read the wonderful story of the four evangelists, you see how true it is that Jesus loved His own—let me cast in by way of interjection, this sentence, that when you come to read your own life's story in the light of the New Jerusalem, you will find it to be true also concerning your Lord and yourself. If you are indeed the Lord's own, He at all times deals lovingly with you, and never acts in unkindness or wrath—

"He may chasten and correct,
But He never can neglect;
May in faithfulness reprove,
But He never can cease to love."

Our Savior's faithfulness towards the chosen band whom He had elected into His fellowship was most remarkable. He had selected persons who must have been but poor companions for one of so gigantic a mind and so large a heart. He must have been greatly shocked at their worldliness. They groveled in the dust when He mounted to the stars. He was thinking of the baptism with which He was to he baptized, and He was straitened until it was accomplished—but they were disputing which among them would be the greatest. He was ready to deny Himself that He might do His Father's will, and meanwhile they were asking to sit at His right hand and at His left hand in His kingdom. They often misunderstood Him because of the carnality of their minds, and when He warned

them of an evil leaven, they thought of the loaves which they had forgotten. Earthworms are miserable company for angels; moles are but unhappy company for eagles, yet *love* made our great Master endure the society of His ignorant and carnal followers. They were but babes in Christ, and possessed but slight illumination, and yet for all that, He who knew all things, and is the wisdom of God, condescended to call them His mother, and sister, and brother.

Worse than the fact of their natural worldliness perhaps, was the apparent impossibility of lifting them out of that low condition, for though never man spoke as *He* spoke, how little did they understand; and though He took them aside and said to them, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God," yet after many and plain teachings, He was compelled to say to one of the best of them, "Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" They were dull scholars! There is no teacher here who could have had patience with such heavy intellects, but our Lord and Master's love remained evermore at flood tide, notwithstanding their incorrigible stupidity. His love was stronger than their unbelief and ignorance.

My brothers and sisters, when we love a person, we expect to have some little sympathy from him in the great design and aim of our life. I suppose it would be difficult to maintain any deep affection towards persons who had no sort of communion with us in our all-absorbing passion, and yet it was so that our Lord loved disciples who could not be brought to enter at all into the spirit which ruled and governed Him. They would have taken Him and forced upon Him a crown, while He sought only for a cross; they imagined and desired for Him the worldly splendor of a terrestrial throne, but He foresaw the reality of glory in sweat of blood, and a cruel death. Our Lord was all for self-denial, employing Himself, and acting as the

Servant of servants; they could not comprehend the rule of self-sacrifice which governed His actions, nor could they see what He aimed at; had they dared, they would rather have thwarted than assisted Him in His self-sacrificing mission; they were fools and slow of heart to understand, even though He plainly told them of His decease. When He set His face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, humanly speaking He needed friends to have aided and abetted Him in His high resolve, but He found no help in *them;* when, in that dark, that dreadful night, He bowed in prayer, and sweat the bloody sweat, He went backward and forward three times, as if seeking a little sympathy from men so dearly loved, but He had to complain of them, "What, could you not watch with Me one hour?" Still, having loved them, neither their worldliness nor their stupidity, nor their lack of sympathy with Him could prevent Him from loving them unto the end. Many waters could not quench His love; neither could the floods drown it!

The Redeemer's love was made to endure even sterner strains than these. On one or two occasions certain of them were even guilty of impertinence. It was no small trial to the Savior's affection when Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him. Peter rebuking his Master! Surely your Lord will have done with you, you son of Jonas! The Lord turned him about and said, "Get you behind Me, Satan!" But after using that strong expression to rebuke a temptation which was evidently Satanic, His affection to Peter remained unabated. That was a stern trial, too, when at a later period than our text, *"all* the disciples forsook Him and fled"; when not even the loving John remained constant to his Master in the hour of betrayal; when one, the boldest of them, with oaths and cursing said, "I know not the Man." Carrying the text beyond its original position, we may say that over the head of all infirmities, ignorance, selfishness, desertion, and denial, Jesus Christ, who

had loved His own that were in the world, loved them to the end. It was not possible for them, with all their follies, failings, and sins, to break through the magic circle of His affection; He had hedged them in once and for all; He had bound them to Himself with bonds firmer than brass, and stronger than triple steel. And neither the temptations of hell, nor the suggestions of their own corruptions, could tear them from His heart. The attachments of Jesus were abiding; fickleness and instability could never be charged to Him. Others love for a little while, and then grow cold; they *profess* eternal attachment and yet forsake; they admire and esteem us till a slight misunderstanding snaps every bond of friendship; but our Lord was the mirror of constancy, the pattern of fidelity, the paragon of unchanging love. As Jonathan clave to David, even so did Jesus cleave to His people.

The proofs which our Lord gave of His love to His people were very many, and for a little while we will ponder them: they will all go to prove that He loved His people, even to perfection, as the text may be read. Observe how our Master, having chosen to Himself a people, proved His love by His continual companionship. He sought no other company than theirs among the sons of men. There were minds far deeper in philosophic lore, but He communed not with them; there were the great and mighty of this world, but our Savior did not court them; He was content to dwell among His own people; He had made His choice and to that choice He kept—fishermen and peasants were His bosom friends. You would not expect a master to find rest in the society of his scholars; you do not expect men of mind and mark to affectionately consort with those who are far beneath them in attainments; and yet here was love, that Jesus, passing by angels, and kings, and sages, chose for His companions unlettered men and women. Those fishermen of Galilee were His companions at all times; and

only when He withdrew Himself into the silent mount, and the shadows of midnight, did He remove the link of companionship from them, and then only that He might make *intercession for them* with the eternal God. Yes, it was a deep proof of the unlimited love of Jesus, a sure sign of its going to the end and verge of possibilities, that He abode so long in affectionate fellowship with so poor, so illiterate, so earthbound a company of men.

He proved His love by being always ready to instruct them on all points. His teachings were very simple, because He loved them so well. The epistles of Paul are, in some respects, far deeper than the teachings of Jesus; for instance, Paul more explicitly lays down the doctrine of justification by faith, of total depravity, of election, and kindred truths of God. And why? Observe the humility and lovingkindness of the Master. He knew infinitely more than Paul, for He is essential wisdom, but He was pleased, because their weak eyes were not able at that time to bear the full blaze of the light of God, to leave the fuller manifestation of gospel mysteries until the Spirit had been given, and then He raised up His servant Paul to write, under His guidance, the deep things of God. His love to His disciples is shown as clearly in what He kept back from them as in what He revealed to them. How loving it was on the part of the great Teacher to dwell so often upon the simpler truths of God, and the more practical precepts; it was as though a senior professor of the university should sit down in the family, and teach boys and girls their alphabet day after day, or spend all his time in teaching village urchins simple addition and subtraction. A man who is thoroughly acquainted with the highest branches of knowledge finds it a terrible drudgery to go over and over the first principles—and yet our Lord did this very thing, and made no trouble of it. He, by the space of three years, taught the simplicities of the faith, and thus indisputably

proved His condescending love to perfection towards His own which were in the world.

How willing He always was, all His life, to render any kind of assistance to His followers! Whenever they were in trouble, He was their willing and able friend; when the sea roared and was tempestuous, and He slept for a while hard by the helm, they had but to wake Him, and He rebuked the sea, and straightaway the winds and waves were still. When Peter's wife's mother was sick of a fever, He did but enter the house and speak the word, and the fever left her; and when one of His dearest friends had passed beyond ordinary bounds of hope, and was not only dead, but had been buried four days, yet He loved even to that far-reaching end, and proved that He was the resurrection and the life by effectually crying, "Lazarus, come forth." everywhere, at all times, He was at the beck and call of His disciples whom He truly called His friends; they might freely express their desires—if they were right, they were granted; and if they were wrong, they were reproved with such gentleness that a refusal was better than a grant.

The Master displayed His love to His disciples throughout His life by the way in which He sought to comfort them when He foresaw that they would be cast down; especially was this true at the period before His Passion—when one would have thought *He* might have sought comfort, He was busy *distributing* it! Those choice words which have flown like a dove into many a mourner's window bearing the olive branch of peace were the fond utterances of a thoughtful heart. "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions." Many such bottles of oil and wine did He apply to the wounds of His disciples. He would not have them suffer any kind of spiritual turmoil. "In the world you shall have tribulation," said He, "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." His peace He distributed right

liberally, and left it as His last legacy—"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world gives give I unto you." In the private life of every one of those chosen men, there must have been incidents of matchless tenderness, but they are not recorded, because if all were written which Jesus did, even the world itself would not contain the things which should have been written. Enough is written to let us see that no tenderness of mothers, or care of friends, could match the ever generous forethought of the friend of man.

That He loved His disciples to the end is seen further in the fact that He constantly pleaded for them when He poured out His strong cries and tears. He watched them with an eye that was quick to perceive their perils, and before they knew their danger, He had already provided a refuge from it. Before the poison was injected by the old serpent, the antidote was at hand. "Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat"; the temptation had not reached the stage of actual fact, it was only a *desire* on Satan's part, but the Lord outran the enemy with His intercessions, and so saved poor Peter from the sieve. The High Priest, chosen from among men, pleaded in His midnight wrestling for all His people, mentioning their names one by one before the Majesty of heaven, and so averting evils which otherwise had destroyed them. Surely those sacred pleadings brought down upon the apostolic band those matchless blessings which qualified them in later years to be the spiritual fathers of the church, and the heralds of salvation to nations. Who doubts the love of such an Intercessor?

The text affords us one other illustration, for Jesus took the towel and washed His disciples' feet. This is, no doubt, marked out by our text as a clear proof of boundless love, in that He humbled Himself, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and fulfilled a menial's office.

But yet, beloved, all these things put together do not amount to so overwhelming a proof of abounding love as the fact that, after having lived out His love, the Lord Jesus then *died* to exhibit it yet more. From Gethsemane to Golgotha, along the blood-sprinkled road, you see proof that having loved His own, He loved them to the end. Not all the pains of death could shake His firm affection to His own. They may bind His hands, but His heart is not restrained from His love; they may scourge Him, but they cannot drive out of Him His affection to His beloved; they may slanderously revile Him, but they cannot compel Him to say a word against His people; they may nail Him to the accursed tree, and they may bid Him come down from the cross, and they will believe on Him, but they cannot tempt Him to forsake His work of love; He must press forward for His people's sake until He can say, "It is finished." Oh, that tragedy upon Calvary was a going to the end indeed, when, having yielded up comfort, reputation, and liberty, He gave up even His last rag of covering, and then resigned His breath. Standing, as it were, at the world's end, at the grave's mouth, and at hell's door, the cross of Jesus reveals the love of God to the utmost end, and is a grand display of the immutability and invincibility of the affection of the heart of Jesus.

I need not detain you longer on the text as it related to His people when He was here in the flesh, for I shall need your earnest attention for but a short time while, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I would set forth this precious truth of God as it relates to all His people, to all His saints.

We read that our Lord, "Came unto *His own,* and His own received Him not." And here, in this case we read, "Having loved *His own."* Now, the words are different in the original. In the first case it is a neuter noun—"He came to His own (things); but in this instance it is a masculine—"Having loved His own (persons)." Now, a man may part with his own things; he may

sell his own house, or cattle, or merchandise; he may give away his own money; but a man cannot part with his own when it relates to persons; he cannot part with his own child, his own wife, his own father, or his own brother or sister. We hold indisputable property in our own relatives; this is *real* property with an emphasis, our own freehold, our perpetual possession. The Lord Jesus has just such a property in His own people—they are His brothers and sisters, forever near of kin to Him.

Now of these "own" persons we read that our Lord, "Having loved His own that were in the world, loved them to the end." The text opens three windows for us, with three outlooks upon the past, the present, and the future.

1. And first, as to the past; let us with holy contemplation review it. He has loved His own people from of old. A most blessed fact! He has loved them *eternally*. There never was a time when He did *not* love them; His love is positively dateless; before the heavens and earth were made, and the stars were first touched with the torch of flame, Jesus had received His people from His Father, and written their names on His heart. This everlasting love has a specialty about it. Our Lord has a general love of *benevolence* towards all His creatures, for "God is love," but He has a special place in His heart for His own peculiar ones. There is a discriminating and distinguishing power about that love that is spoken of in the text, for it is *not* said, "Having loved *all men*," but, "Having loved *His own* which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Jesus, before the entire world, set the crown of His peculiar love upon those whom He foreordained unto His glory.

This love of His is infinite. Jesus does not love His own with a little of His love, nor regard them with some small degree of affection, but He says, "As the Father has loved Me, even so have I loved you," and the Father's love to the Son is inconceivably great, since they are one in essence, ineffably one.

The Father cannot but love the Son infinitely; neither does the Son ever love His people less than with all His heart. It is an affection which no angelic mind could measure, inconceivable, unknown.

Jesus loved His people with a foresight of what they would be. Love is blind, they say, but not the Savior's love. He knew that "His own" would fall in Adam; He knew that as they lived personally, each one would become a sinner; He understood that they would be hard to reclaim, and difficult to retain, even after they had been reclaimed; He saw every sin that they would commit in the glass of the future, for from His prescient eye nothing can be hidden. And yet He loved His own over the head of all their sins, and their revolts, and their shortcomings. Hence we see that He bears towards them an affection which cannot be changed, for nothing can occur which He has not foreseen; there is nothing therefore which has not already been taken into calculation in the matter of His choice. No new circumstance can shed unexpected light upon the case; no startling and unforeseen event can become an argument for a change, hence Jesus' love is full of immutability. There are no ups and downs in the love of Christ towards His people. On their highest Tabors He loves them, but equally as well in their Gethsemanes. When they wander like lost sheep His great love goes after them, and when they come back with broken hearts, His great love restores them. By day, by night, in sickness, in sorrow, in poverty, in famine, in prison, in the hour of death, that silver stream of love ripples at their side, never stayed, never diminished. Forever is the sea of divine grace at its flood; this sun never sets; this fountain never pauses.

The love of Christ is more than a passion. You and I are moved by passion, but the Son of God is not. As man, He may be, but as God He has no passion. Hence the love of Christ towards His people is a settled principle—self-created and self-

sustained; not subject to changes like terrestrial things, but firm and stable, built on a rock. Glory be to God, there was something in the very nature of Christ which made Him love us, something in the very character of that blessed divine person which compelled Him to manifest affection towards His people: it was nothing from the outside, that mighty love was born from within. Here again we come back to the same precious truth of God, that His love cannot be destroyed, because the source from which it comes is eternal, and is found within Himself!

The love of Jesus Christ in the past has been attested by many deeds of love. That He loved us He proved by the fact that He stood as surety for us when the covenant was made, and entered into stipulations on our behalf that He would fulfill the broken law, and that He would offer satisfaction to the justice of God which had been provoked. In the fullness of time He took upon Himself our nature. What higher proof of love than that? In that nature He lived a life of blameless service; in that nature He died a death in which all the weight of divine vengeance for sin was compressed into a few hours of bodily and spiritual anguish. Now that He lives exalted in the highest heaven, He is still His people's servant, interceding for them, representing them at the right hand of God, preparing a place for them, and by His mighty Spirit He is fetching them out from the mass of mankind, and preparing them for the place which He has prepared for them in glory. All these proofs show indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, how in the past Jesus Christ has loved His people. Grasp it, I pray you, now, for a minute, grasp it! Realize it by putting out the hand of individual faith, and saying, "He loved *me* in those hoary ages; He loved *me* before time began, and days and years were first mapped out; He loved *me* before He had made a star or given light to the sun; He loved *me*, yes, *me* in particular, *me* with a specialty, *me* as

much as any of those on whom His heart is set!" Do you believe in Him this morning? Say, poor sinner, do you cast yourself upon Him, and take Him to be your only trust and confidence? Then you may take the text with full assurance as being yours—having loved His own, He loved *you*, even you. I always feel, when I speak upon this topic, as if I would rather sit down and be silent than speak, because it is not so much a theme for *speech* as for *meditation*. Expressive silence must sing this hymn in your soul's ears. Jesus did not merely think of you, and pity you, but *loved* you, and *betrothed* you unto Himself forever! That an angel should love an ant would be a remarkable stoop, but that Jesus should love *you* is a miracle of miracles, a wonder which never could be excelled. Let each one adoringly bless the name of the Lord who does great wonders.

2. The second window looks out upon the present. The text says, "Having loved His own *which were in the world."* It does not seem to strike one as an extraordinary thing that Jesus should love His own who are in *heaven*. See them yonder, white robed and fair to look upon, with melodious voices, without fault before the eternal throne. Well may Jesus love *them*, for there is much beauty in them; His grace has made them lovable; but to love His own which are in the *world* is quite another and stranger thing, and yet it is the blessed fact to which the text calls attention. May you now by faith feed upon it—Jesus Christ loved those who were in the world when He was here, and He now loves His own who are in the world today. You are in the world, and, as you all too surely feel, temptations have shown you that you are not yet in heaven; you have sighed for a lodge in some vast wilderness, that you might cease from the troubles of earth, for what with the evil language which you hear, the corrupt practices which come under your notice, the temptations that are thrust in your own way, and the persecutions and the cruel mocking with which you are tried,

you feel that this is a wretched world to live in. Now mark, Jesus loves His own who are in the world. You working men who have to work with so many bad fellows, you tradesmen who have to go in among many who shock you, you good work girls who meet with so many tempters, if you are His, He loves His own which are in the world. "Behold," He says, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Now, if the shepherd sends forth the sheep into the midst of wolves, you may rest assured that He takes not His eyes off any sheep; He will have a peculiar regard, a watchful affection for those who are exposed to peculiar perils through the sinfulness of the generation among whom they dwell. He loves His own which are in the world. "Oh!" says one, "I would not mind if it was only temptations, and trials, and persecutions, but oh, I find I am in the world by the fact that I sin myself. If I could but keep my own nature clean, all would be well; but, alas, I fall! My angry temper betrays me; proud thoughts are indulged, vanities lodge with me. I had to come groaning up to the house of God this morning, and feel half ashamed to sit with the Lord's people, for I am less than the least of them all." This is the result of your being in the world, for as long as you are in this world, you will have to wrestle hard with the old nature and its inbred sins. Well, but Jesus loves His own which are in the world. He sees your imperfection, He knows what you have to struggle with, He understands well enough the uprisings of your nature, and He still loves you notwithstanding all. "Ah!" says another, "I have come here today burdened with a very heavy trouble; the partner of my life is sick at home, and near to death." "Alas!" cries another, "My dear child is dying, and I found it hard to tear myself away from the bedside." "Worse still," moans another, "I have a living cross to carry; one of my sons is breaking my heart." "Ah!" exclaims a fourth, "I have a bill to meet tomorrow, and I do not know how it will be done;

I fear I shall be ruined." All these things go to show that we are yet in the world of sorrow. As the sparks fly upward, so were we born to trouble—why do we count it a strange thing?

But Jesus loves His own which are in this dolorous world—this is the balm of our griefs, and I call upon you to hold to it, and not let the devil delude you into the idea that the Lord does not love you because affliction happens to you as it does to other men. Of course it must so happen so long as you are in the world; how can you expect exemption? Would you have a glass case made for you to keep you snug away from all the frosts and winds of this world? Would you have your heavenly Father indulge you with all the sweet things of this life, and spoil you for the life to come? Would you strike the root in this world, and never be transplanted to the heavenly Eden? Do you wish to have your rest and portion in *this* life? Oh no; you should not wish for that! Well, then, take what God sends you; receive evil as well as good from Jehovah's hand, as Job did; but never let it be the thought of your heart that Jesus does not love you because you are subjected to evils which are necessary to the place in which, for wise reasons, He allows you for a little to remain. He prizes His gold as much while it is in the furnace as when it is drawn forth. Believe in His love now. Do as Rutherford did—he tells us that when banished by his enemies, and shut up as it were in the world's dark cellar, he began to feel about him for the wine bottles (for God keeps His choice wines in the vaults of sorrow), and he soon found the wine of heavenly consolation—wines on the lees, well refined, and drank freely and was refreshed; you do the same! When you are brought low, believe that there is always a comfort near; when you have much of this world's prosperity you may suspect some *danger* near. After a profound calm comes the terrible tempest. Whenever you are overwhelmed with great trouble, you may rest assured that choicest blessings

are on the road for you. Jesus Christ will make your consolations to abound in proportion as your tribulations abound; if one scale is heavy, the other shall balance it. While you are in the world, you shall be cheered with tokens of the Bridegroom's regard.

3. The third window of the text looks out to the *future*. Having loved His own He "loved them *unto the end."* He will love His people to the utmost end of their unloveliness; their sinfulness cannot travel so far but what His love will travel beyond it; even their unbelief shall not be extended to so great a length but what His faithfulness shall still be wider and broader than their unfaithfulness. He will never allow one of His chosen to fall into such deadly sin or to go so far in it that He cannot yet outstrip all the strides which his iniquities may have taken. If our sins are mountains, His love shall be like Noah's flood, and the tops of the mountains shall be covered, and not so much as a sin shall be found against us.

He will love His own to the end, that is, to the end of all their needs. Deep as their helpless miseries are shall be the extent of His grace. If their need of pardon abounds, the blood shall be more able to pardon than their sins shall be able to defile. They may need more than this world can hold, and all that heaven can give, but Jesus will go to the end of all their necessities, and even beyond them, for He is "able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him." He will love them to the end of their lives; as long as they live here, His love shall be with them; and as there shall be no end of their existence hereafter, He will continue the same fondness to them. And what if I say He will love them to the end of His own life, if such a thing were allowable? Until the eternal God shall die, His love shall never depart from any of His beloved; unless the heart of Jesus shall cease to beat, and the eternal Savior shall expire in death; that heart shall never fail in

affection towards His people, nor shall His love ever depart from them. Oh, how charming it is to reflect that to the end Jesus loves, because you cannot raise any objection, or think of any difficulty but what the text meets! If you go ever so far, still it is evident that when you are there, you are not beyond the end, and Jesus' love will and must go up to the end, and that is as far as either the sin or the sorrow, the needs or the difficulties of His people can possibly go! The word translated, "end," in the Greek, frequently signifies to *perfection*—He loved them to perfection. Oh, the perfection of the love of Jesus Christ! All that His love can do He will do for His people. None shall be able to say that He has omitted anything which was good for them. "No good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly." Out of all their needs and necessities there shall not be one left unsupplied, but from the first dawn of grace in them, even to the last, the perfection of Jesus' love shall be manifested.

What shall we say to all this in closing the sermon this morning? We shall only say this, if Jesus Christ thus loves to the end, *how ought we to persevere in our love to Him!* Sometimes, dear brothers and sisters, we become warmed up, and we do a great deal very zealously, but soon, too soon, we grow cold again. It is one of my temptations, and I suppose it is yours, to begin to flag, to cease from one's earnestness, to say, "Well, the thing can go on pretty well without my being quite so fast and zealous." The true way of living for Christ is to *always* live at the highest possible rate of force; zealous, not now and then, but *always*, in a good thing for Christ. Sometimes you are very generous, prayerful, and earnest in looking after souls; why not *always* so? Suppose Jesus were *sometimes* loving to you, *sometimes* thoughtful of you; and imagine that there were intervals of forgetfulness on His part, as there are in your case—what a sorry matter it would be for us! Let us repent that we have been so spasmodic in our affection to Him, and let us pray that His

Spirit may dwell in us, that He Himself may abide with us, that we may be *every day*, as we are sometimes, "always abounding in the work of the Lord," steadfast, unmovable. Beloved, I would have you *always* winning souls, *always* adorning the doctrine of God your Savior by holiness, *always* much in prayer, *always* in communion. Would God we were so! The constant faithfulness of our Lord should lead us to this.

The second practical remark will be, if these things are so, that Christ loves His own to the end, *let us not indulge the wicked thought that He will forsake us.* It is impossible that Jesus should leave a soul that hangs upon Him. You may be brought very low, but still underneath you shall be the everlasting arms; you may feel as if you were crushed by the wheels of providence; your spirit may sink nearly into despair, but neither "things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord." Give not way to the fainting spell of unbelief! Believe in Christ, and not in your own *feelings!* Believe in His promise and not in your own feelings! What matters it whether it is day or night with you, whether it is winter or summer? Christ Jesus is the same, and He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." Resort to your unfailing Friend! Lean on the arm whose sinews cannot crack! Cast your weight on the shoulders which cannot grow weary! Play the man and be of good courage for the honor of the gospel—for if the gospel does not cheer us in time of trouble, what is the good of it? If it will not buoy us up when the floods are out, where is the service of it? But, my brothers and sisters, it will! We are not of those who have to deal with a vacillating Redeemer who casts away His people for their sins, and rejects them for their backslidings; we do not have a Savior who loves His own today, and hates them tomorrow; a Christ in whom I have no confidence, and in whose existence I do not believe;

but we have to deal with one who is the same yesterday, today, and forever—one who never did flinch from His purpose nor turn from His decree! And having to deal with such a one, let us not dishonor His name by wavering, and doubting, and fearing; cast yourselves on the Lord, you mourners, and rejoice in Him; lean yourselves upon Him, you burdened ones, and take up your psalm of praise this morning, and go on your way rejoicing!

The last practical remark is, *what a misery it must be to be without such a Savior!* I scarcely know of any two words more sorrowful than these two—"without Christ"; and yet those words are applicable, I fear, to many in this congregation; you have no heavenly Friend into whose ear to whisper your sorrows; you have no faithful Brother, or mighty Savior to help you in your time of need. Your sins are upon you; your iniquities are written in the book of God, engraved as with an iron pen, and written with the point of the diamond. The day of death will soon come, and you will have no one to help you over Jordan's swelling billows. You will stand before the tremendous throne, where the voice shall be as thunder, and the eyes of the Judge like lightning, and you shall have no advocate to plead your cause, no Redeemer to take your soul beneath His sheltering wings! There is still hope, for Jesus is still the friend of sinners. Come unto Him, you weary! Hasten to Him, you laboring and heavy laden! He shuts out none—He welcomes all who come to Him with broken hearts and downcast eyes, seeking pardon through His precious blood. O that you would come to Him this morning! Before another day shall pass away, may you have ended your career of rebellion, and commenced a course of obedience! Then will you sing with us of everlasting love! Then will you rejoice with us in immutable grace! Then shall our God be *your* God, and our heaven shall be *your* heaven. Amen.

811 UNTO YOU, YOUNG MEN – I JOHN 2:14

A Sermon
Delivered on Wednesday Evening, May 13th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Westminster Chapel

"I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." — I John 2:14

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — I John 2]

THE ANNUAL SERMON OF YOUNG MEN IN CONNECTION WITH THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY

JOHN ABOUNDED in charity, but with the utmost stretch of it he could not have written to all young men in this style, for, alas, all young men are *not* strong, nor does the Word of God abide in them all, nor have they all overcome the wicked one. Strong in muscle they may be, like Samson, but like Samson they are weak in moral principle, and before long are found in the lap of a sinful Delilah to their own destruction. What multitudes of young men there are in London who, instead of being spiritually strong, are weakness itself—bending like the willow in every gale, drifting down the stream like dead fish— having neither the wish nor the ability to stem the torrent of temptation. These weak young men who are entrapped in every snare, taken with every bait, are the objects of our earnest anxiety; but to them we can address no epistles

entreating their aid in holy work, or cheering them with sacred consolations.

It is painful to reflect that in the vast mass of ripening manhood the Word of God does *not* abide. Tens of thousands of them do not even hear it; they look upon the Sabbath as a day of amusement, and to religious exercises as a slavery. Thousands more attend to the word only after the fashion of the old proverb, "In at one ear, and out at the other." They see their natural face in the glass of the word, but they go their way and straightaway forget what manner of men they are; they are young men of good judgment, too, in worldly things, and yet so foolish as to esteem *eternal* things as mere trifles; they play with immortality, and value the joys of an hour of sin at a higher price than unending bliss.

Assuredly in this land there are multitudes of young men who have not overcome the wicked one. No, they never thought of doing so, for they are hand in glove with him—they are among his best allies! It is a shame that it should be so, that when Satan seeks recruits for his army, he should straightaway send his recruiting sergeant for these fine young fellows. They ought to serve a better master, but they are all too willing to give up at once the strength of their youth and the force of their character to the service of a deceiver—overcome the wicked one, indeed! In many young men he reigns supreme, and they are led captive by him at his will—wickedly insinuating all the while, that they are the milksops and the fools who dare to do right, and scorn to fling away their souls for the sake of temporary pleasures.

Now, there may be in this place tonight some of these young men who are not strong, in whom the Word of God does not abide, and who have not overcome the wicked one. Let conscience seek out such, and when they are fully revealed and discovered to *themselves*, let them deliberately take stock of

their position in the light of *death* and *judgment*—and may they, by God's grace, be made to pause awhile, and then to decide that it will be a wiser course of action to repent before God, to believe in Jesus, and to give themselves up to Him who can make them strong, and put the living seed of His word into their hearts, and enable them to overcome the wicked one.

But I address myself to many, I trust, this evening, who are such as John described, and who can give praise to distinguishing grace that they are such, for they feel that had they been left to themselves, they would have possessed no strength, and would not have held the living truth of God within their hearts. O for a shout of sacred joy from everyone who has been redeemed from his estate of bondage brought up out of the wilderness, and led into the Canaan of salvation! O for something better than shouts of praise—namely, *holy* lives, *devoted* actions, *constant* consecration from those who thus have been strengthened and quickened, and made victors over sin!

Two or three things we shall speak about tonight. First, *our text describes the model young man;* secondly, we infer from it *that such model men have within them qualifications for usefulness.* John wrote to these young men because they were so-and-so, and so-and-so. I shall ask some here to serve God for the same reason, because those parts which make the model man are just such as will qualify them to serve God; and, in the third and last place, *I shall try to urge the conscription upon many here,* hoping that many will be written down as God's warriors from this good hour.

I. First, then, before us we have **THE PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MODEL YOUNG MAN.**

Nothing is said about his learning—he may be a model of everything that is spiritually good though his education may have been neglected: nothing is said about his wealth, his position in society, or his personal appearance—without

anything to boast of in relation to any of these things he may yet be in the advance guard of Christ's soldiers.

1. What is spoken in the text has to do only with *spiritual* qualifications, and it deals with three points. First, *this young man is strong.* The strength here meant is not that which is the result of his being in his youth—not a mere natural vigor, but a *spiritual* strength—a strength which comes from the Lord of Hosts, a strength here meant is a strength which is the result of the indwelling of the Spirit within the man; a strength which brings out and consecrates the natural energy, and makes the young man with his vigor to be vigorous in the right direction. "I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong."

Now, the spiritually strong man may be described in this way—*he is one who is very decided for Christ.* He is not half-hearted, halting between two opinions; there is nothing about him now, as there once might have been, of questioning or hesitation. He is for Christ. Whoever may be for the false, he is for the true; whoever may side with the unjust, he is for the honest; whoever may adopt crooked policies, he is for straightforward principles. He has made up his mind to it, that he is Christ's, and therefore he does not tolerate within his soul *anything* like a question on that matter; he is decided, not only in his service for Christ, but in his opinions; he knows what he knows, he holds firmly what he holds, he is a strong man in the truth of God. You cannot pull him by the ear this way today, and that way tomorrow; he does not depend upon his religious teacher for his religious thought—he does his own thinking with his Bible before him; by the grace of God he has grown strong by feeding on an heavenly diet; he is a man with his feet firmly planted on a rock. You may meet with weak professors almost everywhere, and you may, by specious arguments, entice them to almost everything, but the young man who is strong will listen to what you have to say, and weigh it in the scales of judgment—but

when once weighed and found wanting—he will reject it without hesitation; he at once rejects the wrong, and cleaves to that which is right, for God has made him strong in integrity of heart.

While thus strong in decision, *he is also strong in the matter of establishment.* He once believed the truths of God because he was so taught, but now he begins to search to the roots of them, and to find out the arguments which support them. He has proven, if not all things, yet enough to hold fast that which is good; he has become established by some little experience, for, though a young man, experience may come to him and indeed, it does come to some young men without the lapse of many years. The experience of a single night has taught a man more than the experience of years, and the experience of a single day, a bitter sorrow, or ardent labor, has been more valuable than the mere lapse of a score of ordinary years of prosperity and joy. What little experience the man has had, and what little observation he has been able to make, have joined together to confirm what he believes, and now, though he does not care to be always arguing—in fact, he has passed beyond that stage; though he does not care to be always testing and trying things—he has advanced farther than that—yet he is prepared, when objections are advanced, to meet them in a spirit of meekness, and he is prepared to instruct the ignorant, and those who are out of the way. He is strong in establishment, as well as in decision. Nor is this all, he has become strong, through the divine grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *in a vigor diffused throughout his whole spiritual constitution.* A very large proportion of the members of our churches are, I trust, alive, but you have to try them by various experiments to know whether there is any life in them. They are like persons just fished up from the water, and in order to discover whether they are alive, you place a mirror before their mouth and watch for a little dampness upon

it; you kneel down and try to detect the faint sound of breathing—

> "'Tis a point I long to know,
> Oft it causes anxious thought."

This is the miserable cry of many; there may be life in them, but it is life in a fainting fit or sound sleep. But the vigorous Christian is far different from this. He does not ask whether he is alive or not—he knows he is by that which he is enabled to do, by the strength of his life; by that which he feels palpitating within, by the aspirations that glow within his soul; yes, and even by the griefs and pains which make him bow his head. He *knows* that he lives. Others in our churches do something for Christ, and know that they are alive, but their whole spiritual system is relaxed. If they take up the hammer and work for God, they strike such feeble blows that the nails do not know it; if they take the spade in their hand to dig in the Master's vineyard, the weeds laugh them to scorn; they are so exceedingly feeble, and generally so changeable, so fond of new work and of running after this and that, that they are of little or no real service to the church. But the strong man in Christ Jesus is one who, if he fights, dashes to pieces the helmet of his foe, and if he wields the sling and the stone, he takes care that the stone shall be sent with force enough to go through Goliath's skull. He is a man who, if he prays, makes the gates of heaven shake, and the vaults of heaven ring. He is a man who, when he pleads with sinners, pleads all over— hands and face, and every muscle revealing his earnestness. He cannot drag on in a dead-and-alive life. He feels that if religion is worth anything, it is worth everything, and he throws his whole being into it—body, soul, and spirit, ardently and to the utmost pitch of energy, being given up to the Master's cause.

Meanwhile he is not only strong in actual service, but *he is strong in what he cannot do.* Some of the most acceptable things which are recorded in heaven are the things which are in our hearts, but which cannot come to our hands for lack of power. It is a great thing, brothers, to always have some work before you which makes you stand on your tiptoes to reach it—and to be *continually* reaching up till at last you attain it, and then to reach for something still beyond you. I like the thought of David sitting down before the Lord, and meditating about that house of cedar which he was *not* permitted to build! The strong young man will have many schemes crossing his brain, and while he is in his youth he will not be able to realize them, but they will flit before him so often, that at last he will pluck up courage, and as he grows in years and possibilities, he will at last make real that which once was but a dream. Do not be ashamed, my dear young friends, you who have scarcely left your father's roof, do not be ashamed, sometimes, to have a few right thorough daydreams; do not be ashamed to indulge in thoughts of what you would do if you could. I say this provided that you are now doing all you can, and this day consecrating to God all you have. Go to Him and ask Him to enable you to do *more* in your future life—and plan and *work* for that future life. Have strength of purpose, and it may be God will give you strength of opportunity, and if He does *not*, yet it shall be well that it was in your heart. I may say, too, even in the presence of the honored fathers who surround the pulpit, we sadly need a generation of stronger men in our churches. We will not decry the blessings which God has given us already; I do not believe that any age was better than this, all things considered, but this is the time when we need our young men to be strong to all the intents of strength. Battles are coming in which they will need to stand with firm feet; there will be strifes in which they will not be of the slightest value if they cannot

brave the conflict in the very front, or fight where fly showers of fiery arrows and hot bolts of hell. Rest assured these are not silken days, nor times to make us dream that we have won the victory. Our fathers, where are they? They are looking down upon us from their thrones, but what do they see? Do they see us wearing the crown, and waving the palm branch? If so, they see us lunatics, indeed, for that was a madman's sport; but rather they see us sharpening our swords afresh, and buckling on our panoply anew, to fight the same fight which they fought under other circumstances. The young blood of the church, under God, is our great hope in the conflict for King Jesus. The young men of the church must be, in the next 20 years, the very soul and vigor of it, and therefore, may God raise up among us a goodly seed, a race of heroes swifter than eagles for zeal, and stronger than lions for faith.

2. The text gives a further description of the model Christian young man in the words, *"And the Word of God abides in you."* Her Majesty was on the south side of the water today, but she does not abide there. All the pomp and sunshine of her presence have vanished, and Westminster Bridge and Stangate are as they were before. The word sometimes comes with right royal pomp into the minds of young men—they are affected by it for a time, and they rejoice in it, but, alas, that blessed word soon departs, and they are none the better for that which they have heard. Multitudes are still stony ground hearers; they receive the word with joy, but they have no root, and by-and-by they all wither away. The model young man in the text is not of this kind. The Word of God abides in him, by which I understand that *he is one who understands the word,* for it must get into him before it can abide in him, and it can only enter by the door of the *understanding.* He *understands* the word and then, by having *affection* for the word he shuts that door and entertains the truth of God. Men who understand the gospel are not quite

as common as we sometimes suppose. I am not certain whether the giving up of the use of the *Westminster Assembly's Catechism* was a very wise thing. That grand old epitome of doctrine conveys to those who are taught it intelligently, a most solid basis upon which afterwards the truth may be built. A considerable number of our church members do not understand the truth which they profess to have received. I believe this is more or less true of all denominations, and that the pastors need to adopt measures, by classes or otherwise, which, under the Holy Spirit's blessing, might build up our youth in our most holy faith. The model young man is thus taught; he understands the truth so far as it is a matter of intellect; he grapples it to himself as with hooks of steel by intense affection, and then he lives it out with all his soul. While he holds the Word of God as a doctrine, it holds him as a living indwelling force.

The Word of God abides in him, that is, *he is constantly feeling its effects*. It abides in him, "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life"—a sacred fire consuming his sins, and comforting his spirit. It abides in him, a heavenly messenger revealing to him the freshness of celestial truth, uplifting him from earthly desires, and preparing him for the mansions in the skies. The gospel permeates his nature; it is inter-twisted into his very self. You would more readily destroy him than make him apostatize.—

"The cords that bind around his heart
Tortures and riches might tear off;
But they could never, never part
The hold he has on Christ his Lord."

The Word of God has become God's resident lieutenant, dwelling in his spirit, reigning like a sovereign over his entire

soul. It abides within him as an incorruptible seed which death itself cannot kill. This is the blessed young man, indeed, God has blessed him, and who shall reverse the benediction?

3. Thirdly, the text adds, *"And you have overcome the wicked one."* This is said of the young man. He is but a young man in grace; he has not reached the point of fatherhood in Christ, but for all that he has overcome the wicked one. It strikes me that Christianity use to be spoken of as a more effective thing than it is now. When people pray they seldom speak positively about what religion has done for them. I have often heard a brother say, "The Lord has done great things for us: and *we desire* to be glad." Why, dear brother, if the Lord has done great things for you, you *are* glad! I have known that text, "The love of Christ compels us," preached from as if it said that the love of Christ *ought* to compel us, which is very true, but it is not the truth of the text! It *does* compel us; it *does* rule in the soul. We often speak of wrestling with Satan, struggling and striving to overcome, but the *text* speaks of a victory *already* achieved, and too, by young men! We dishonor God and make people think little of the gospel when we put in those pretended humbling terms which are only used to let people see how exceedingly humble we are; we are so mock-modest as to refuse to acknowledge the power of divine grace in our own souls. As a man I would speak diffidently about anything that I do *myself,* but of anything that God has done *in* me, or *for* me, or *by* me, I shall not speak with bated breath, but affirm it, and rejoice in it that God may be glorified.

There are men here who have overcome the devil, and they have overcome him in many shapes. There are many pictures of the devil about, but I am afraid there are none of them accurate, for he assumes different shapes in different places. He is a chameleon, always affected by the light in which he happens to be; a Proteus, assuming every shape so that it may

but help his purpose. Some young men have overcome that *blue* devil which keeps men despairing, doubting, trembling, and fearing. You once were subject to him; you could not, you said, believe in Christ; you were afraid you never would be saved; you wrote bitter things against yourself. Ah, but you have cast him out, now, by a simple faith in Jesus! You know whom you have believed, and you are persuaded that He is able to keep that which you have committed unto Him. You have overcome that devil, and though he does try to come back, and when your business is a little troublesome, or the liver may not be acting properly, he endeavors to insinuate himself. Yet, by God's grace, he shall never fasten on the old chains again.

Then there is that dust-eating devil, of whom we can never speak too badly—the yellow devil of the mammon of unrighteousness, the love of gold and silver; the dreaded god of London, rolling over this city as if it were all his own. I think I see him as a dragon on the top of the church steeple, chuckling at the inscription over the Royal Exchange—"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," and laughing because he knows better, for he reckons it all belongs to *him;* even as of old he said to Christ, "All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me." What tricks are done nowadays in business for the love of gold! In fact, we know, some of us who are not business men, but who, nevertheless, are not blind, that dishonest marks and dishonest measures have become so systematic that their effect is lost, and the thing itself is almost as honest as if it *were* honest. It is the fact that men have become so accustomed to say that twice three make seven that their neighbors all say, "Exactly so, and we will pay you for the goods after the same reckoning." But the genuine Christian, the man who is strong, and has the Word of God abiding in him, scorns all this. He hears others say, "We must live," but he replies, "Yes, but we must die." He

determines that he will not throw away his soul in order to grasp wealth and that if it is not possible to become a merchant prince without the violation of the code of honor and of Christ's law, then he will be content to be poor. O young man, if you have come to this, you have overcome the wicked one, indeed! I am afraid there are some here with gray heads who have hardly ventured on the fight. Alas, for them!

Another form of the wicked one we must speak of but softly, but oh, how hard to be overcome by the young man. I mean Madam Wanton, that fair but foul, that smiling but murderous fiend of hell by whom so many are deluded. Solomon spoke, "of the strange woman," but the strong Christian in whom the Word of God abides passes by her door, and shuts his ear to her siren song; he flees youthful lusts which war against the soul, he reserves both his body and his soul for his Lord who has redeemed him by His precious blood.

Young man, if you are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, you have overcome, I trust, *that Lucifer of pride*, and it is your endeavor to walk humbly with your God! You have given up all idea of merit. You cannot boast nor exalt yourself, but you bow humbly at the foot of the cross, adoring Him who has saved you from the wrath to come.

You have given up, also, I trust, young man, all subjection to the great red dragon *of fashion* who draws with his tail even the very stars of heaven. There are some who would think it far worse to be considered unfashionable than to be thought unchristian. To be unchristian would be but such a common accusation that they might submit to it; but to be *unfashionable* would be horrible indeed! Young men in London get to be affected by this. If the young men in the house are going to such-and-such an entertainment— they all read a certain class of books—if they are dissipated and skeptical, then the temptation is to chime in with them, and only the man who is

strong, and has the Word of God abiding in him, will overcome the wicked one by doing the right alone—

"Faithful among the faithless found."

II. Thus I have described a model Christian young man. Let us further observe that **THESE THINGS WHICH CONSTITUTE WHAT HE IS ARE HIS QUALIFICATIONS FOR USEFULNESS**.

Of course certain talents are necessary for certain positions, but it is a rule without exception that *every* child of God may be useful in the divine family. God has not one single servant for whom He has not appointed a service. Now, observe, my friends, to whom I am now addressing myself—you are strong: that granted, then this very strength which you now have will enable you to do mission work for God, and the graces which have been worked in you, through Christ Jesus—faith, love, courage, patience— are your fitness for sacred labor.

If you are to be a minister, you may need to acquire a measure of learning; if you are to be a missionary, you will need a peculiar training, but you can get these; God will give you strength to obtain them, and the spiritual strength will go very far to help you. Meanwhile, for *other* work, all the strength you require is that which you already possess. There are persons in the world who will not let us speak a word to the unconverted, because they say, and say very truly, that unconverted men are dead in sin, and therefore we are not to tell them to live because they have no power to live. They forget that we have the power in the quickening word and Spirit of God, and that as we speak the Word for God, divine power goes with it. Now, there is among us too much of this forgetfulness of the fact that we actually have His power from on high. In prayer we are always praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is very

proper—but remember, we *have* the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is here! He is not always manifest; but He is given to His church to abide in every one of His people, and if we would but *believe* in His presence, we would feel it more. They who preach most successfully will tell you that one cause of it is that they *expect* to be successful; they do not preach hoping that perhaps one or two may be saved, but *knowing* that they will be, because the Word of God is the *power* of God unto *salvation!* They believe in the Holy Spirit, and they who do so see the Holy Spirit, but they who only waveringly hope in the Holy Spirit discern Him not—according to their faith so is it unto them. Believe, my brother that you have within you, as a believer, the power which is necessary for reforming that house of business of yours which is now so godless, into a house of prayer. Believe it, and begin to work like those who do believe it. Believe that those who pass you in the morning, my young artisan friend, may be and shall be converted by you and by God if you speak to them out of your heart. Go up to them as one who knows that God is working with him; they will be awed by your manner, and if they reject your message they will feel it go hard with their consciences.

"I write unto you, young men, for you are strong." We beg you to use that strength in winning souls for Christ. Remember that this very strength which brings a blessing to yourself will benefit another. That very faith which brought *you* to Christ is all you need to bring others to Christ. "He, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you." You shall find that in which you are spiritually weak within, you will be spiritually powerless without for Christian service—and in as far as you are strong within for your personal communion with the Lord Jesus, to *that* extent shall you be strong without for the work of your Lord. Arise, you strong young men; arise, you who saw the face of Christ this morning in your closets;

arise, you who have waited upon Him in prayer during the day; arise, you that delight in His word—arise, and shake yourselves from the dust! Be active in the might which God has given you to serve Him while yet you may. As the angel said to Gideon, so say I to you—young man, "The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor"; and yet, again, "Go in this your strength."

If the young man inquires for tools and weapons with which to serve his Master, we refer him to the next point in the text, *"The Word of God abides in you."* Now, my dear brother, if you desire to teach others, you have not to ask what the lesson shall be, for it abides in you. Do you need a text that will impress the careless? What impressed you? You cannot have a better! You desire to speak a word in season from the Word of God which shall be likely to comfort the disconsolate? What has comforted your own soul? You cannot have a better guide. You have within your own experience a tutor which cannot fail you, and you have also an encouragement that cannot be taken from you. The Word of God within you will well up like a spring; and truth and grace will pour forth from you in rivers. I have heard our Lord likened to a man carrying a water pot, and as He carried it upon His shoulder, the water fell dropping, dropping, dropping so that everyone could track the water-bearer. So should all His people be, carrying such a fullness of divine grace that everyone should know where they have been by that which they have left behind. He who has lain in the beds of spices will perfume the air through which he walks. One who, like Asher, has dipped his foot in oil, will leave his footprints behind him. When the living and incorruptible seed remains within, the divine instincts of the new nature will guide you to the wisest methods of activity. You will do the right thing under the inward impulse rather than the written Law, and your personal salvation will be your prime qualification for seeking out others of your Master's flock.

Once again, *"you have overcome the wicked one."* The man who has once given Satan a slap in the face need not be afraid of *men*. If you have often stood foot to foot with a violent temptation, and, after wrestling, have overcome it, you can laugh to scorn all the puny adversaries who assail you. It will breed manliness within the young man, and make him a truly muscular Christian to have been practiced in inward conflicts. *You* have overcome Satan by the power of divine grace—why, then, there is hope that in the Sunday school class which you have to teach—in the hearts of those boys and girls, Satan may *again* be conquered! There is hope for that drunken man you have been talking with lately—why should not *he* overcome the wicked one? You were once weak enough, but divine grace has made you strong—what grace has done for you it can do for another! "After I was saved myself" said one, "I never despaired of any other." So should the fact that you have been enabled to achieve a conquest in a very terrible strife, comfort you with regard to all other cases. Go into the back slums—they are not far off; penetrate the dark lanes and alleys. You have overcome the wicked one; you cannot meet with anything worse than he whom you have already vanquished! Let the majesty of grace in your souls be to you a solace and a stimulus—and never say anything is too hard for you to do who have already met Apollyon face to face and put him to the rout.

III. The wording of the text suggested to me **TO FORCE THE CONSCRIPTION**. *"I have written unto you, young men."*

In the French wars, certain young men, unhappily, found their names written down in the conscription, and were marched to the wars. Now, in a war from which none of us desire to escape, I hope there are young men here tonight whose names are written down—heavenly conscripts—who are summoned tonight, more fully than ever before in their lives, to go forth to the battle of the Lord of Hosts. I invite

every young man here who is already converted to God to dedicate himself to the Lord Jesus Christ tonight. It is not a matter that I can talk you into nor indeed would I try it, but I would ask you to sit still a moment, and consider with yourselves this—"I am a believer in Christ; I have been lately to the sacramental table; I profess to have been chosen of God, to have been redeemed with precious blood, to have been separated from the rest of mankind, to be destined for an immortality most brilliant—am I living as becomes a redeemed one?" Passing your hand over your brow thoughtfully, you will come to the conclusion, probably, "I am not; I am serving God, I trust, in a way, but not with all my heart, and soul, and strength as I should. How about my time? Do I devote as much of that as I can to sacred work? How about my talent? Does that display itself most in the Literary Association or in the Sunday school? Are my oratorical abilities most developed in the debating room or in preaching at the street corner? Am I giving to Christ the prime and choice, and vigor of my life? If I am not, I ought to do so; I ought, I feel I ought, to be altogether Christ's; not that I should leave my business, but I must make my business Christ's business, and so conduct it, and so to distribute of its results as to prove that I am Christ's steward, working in the world for Him, and not for self." Dear friends, if this night you shall not so much vow as pray that from this time there shall not be a drop of blood in your body, nor a hair on your head, nor a penny in your purse, nor a word on your tongue, nor a thought in your heart, but what shall be altogether the Lord's, I shall be glad enough.

It will be well if you take a step further as conscripts. You "holy-work folk"—as they used to call those who dwelt around the cathedral at Durham, and were exempt from all service to the baron because they served the church—I want you now *to think of some particular walk and department in which as young men and*

young women you can devote yourselves wholly to Christ. Generalities in religion are always to be avoided, more especially generalities in service. If a man waits upon you for employment, and you say to him, "What are you?" if he replies, "I am a painter, or a carpenter," you can find him work, perhaps, but if he says, "Oh, I can do anything," you understand that he can do nothing. So it is with a sort of spiritual jobber who professes to be able to do anything in the church, but who really does nothing. I want my conscript brothers and sisters tonight to consider what they are going to do, and I beg them to consider it with such deliberation that when once they have come to a conclusion, they will not need to change it, for changes involve losses. What can you do? What is your calling? Ragged schools? Sunday schools? Street preaching? Tract distribution? Here is a choice for you—which do you select? Waste no time, but say, "This is my calling, and by God's grace I will give myself up to it, meaning to do it as well as any manor woman ever did do it—if possible, better; meaning if I take to the Ragged school, to be a thoroughly good teacher of those little Arabs; if I take to the Sunday school, intending to make myself as efficient in the class as ever teacher could be." It shall be no small blessing to the churches whom you represent if such a resolve is made, and if the conscripts are found tonight of such a sort.

I would inquire next, *whether there may not be young men here who can give themselves up to the Christian ministry,* which is a step farther. There are many men who ought to be employed in the Christian ministry who stand back. You need not expect that you will gain earthly wealth by it. If you have any notion of that sort, I pray you keep to your breaking of stones; that will pay you better. If you have any idea that you will find the ministry an easy life, I entreat you to try the treadmill, for that would be an *amusement* compared with the life of the genuine Christian minister—in London, at least. But if you feel an intense

earnestness to win souls, and if you have succeeded in speaking on other subjects and can get some attention, think whether you cannot devote yourself to the work. Ah, young man, if I cast an ambitious thought into your mind I mean it only for my Master's glory! If the Lord should say tonight, "Separate me Saul and Barnabas to this work," if He should call out some fine, noble young fellow, who might have given himself up, perhaps, to the pursuits of commerce, but who now will dedicate himself to the service of the Christian ministry, it would be well. Take care you keep not back whom God would have.

Then, further, I have to ask, *may there not be here some young man who will become a conscript for missionary service abroad?* "I write unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." You are the men we need! Dr. Mullens and Mr. Robinson will be glad to hear of you. I might tonight read a sort of proclamation such as I see sometimes issued by Her Majesty—"Wanted, young men." We give no description about the inches, either in girth or the height, but we do give this description—"Wanted, young men who are strong; in whom the Word of God abides, and who have overcome the wicked one." You who are weak had better stay at home in the Christian nursery a little while. You, in whom the Word of God does not as yet abide, had need to stay till you are taught what are the elements of the faith. You, who have not overcome the wicked one, had better flesh your maiden swords in home fields of conflict. You are not the men who are wanted. But you who are strong enough to do and to dare for Jesus—you who are spiritually-minded enough to have overcome the monster of evil within yourselves—you are the men to fight Satan abroad in his strongholds of heathendom, and Popery, and Mohammedanism. You, the choice men of the church, you are

the men whom the Missionary Society requires! Think of it tonight before you go to sleep and if the Lord inclines you, come forward and say, "Here am I; send me."

Once again. If this is impossible, and I suppose it may be to the most of us, then *may we not get up a conscription tonight of young men who will resolve to help at home those who have the courage to go abroad?* You have nobly done, as young men, in endeavoring to raise a large sum for the work. You are an example to every Christian denomination in that respect. But do not let the project fall short of its full completion, and when it is completed take care that you do it again, for it is good to always be zealous in a good thing. We should forget the things that are behind, and press forward to that which is before. It will be a great thing when *all* Christian merchants do what some are doing, namely, give of their substance to the cause of Christ in due proportion; it is a blessed thing for a young man to begin business with the rule that he will give the Lord at least his tenth. That habit of weekly storing for Christ and then giving to Christ out of his own bag instead of giving from your own purse is a most blessed one. Cultivate it, you young tradesmen who have just set up in business for yourselves, and you good wives help your husbands to do it. You young men who are clerks and have regular incomes, make that a regular part of your weekly business, and let some share of the consecrated spoil go to the Lord's foreign field. At the same time, never let your subscriptions to this or that act as an exoneration from *personal* service; give *yourselves* to Christ—your whole selves in the highest state of vigor, your whole selves constantly, intelligently, without admixture of sinister motives.

May God send His blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

812 THE DEEP-SEATED CHARACTER OF SIN – JER. 17:1

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 17th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars." — Jeremiah 17:1

IN TRAVELING in the East, inscriptions upon the rocks are often met with, which have remained almost as sharp and clear as when they were first cut by the engraver's tool. Some of these owe their indelible character to the hardness of the rocks upon which they have been engraved. They must have been written, to use the expressive language before us, "with a pen of iron," and engraved as "with the point of a diamond." When such writing had been once achieved, those who had achieved their purpose might have said with Pilate, "What I have written I have written," for there it stood, and there it stands. The prophet declares that the sin of Judah was as indelibly cut into their nature as the rock writings in the stone. Their hearts were as hard as rock, and sin was inscribed thereon deeply and plainly, as though written with some iron instrument. Their spirits were just as senseless and hardened as stone itself, and their iniquity appeared as if engraved with the point of a diamond. What was said of Judah, may, with equal truthfulness be said of the whole human race. Circumstances here do not

alter cases. Put men where you will, whether they belong to Judah or to the uncircumcised nations, as face in water answers to face, so the heart of man to man—each man is like his fellow—the hardness of Judah's heart is repeated in the stubbornness of barbarian and Roman, Greek and Scythian; it is seen, indeed, in us, for to deal with ourselves is our main business this morning.

I. We shall commence by answering the question, **WHAT IS SIN?**

We are always hearing about it. It is constantly dunned into our ears by the preacher; we cannot turn over a page of Holy Writ without meeting with it. What is sin? How few people have obtained a right idea of sin! How much smaller is the number expressing the idea clearly! If you ask the Pharisee of old what sin was—"Well," he would say, "it is eating without washing your hands; it is drinking wine without having first of all strained out the gnats, for those insects are unclean, and if you should swallow any of them, they will render you defiled." His repentance dealt with his having touched a Gentile, or having come on the wind side of a Publican. Many in these days have the same notion, but with a variation. We have read of a Spanish bandit, who, when he confessed before his father-confessor, complained that one sin hung with peculiar weight upon his soul that was of peculiar atrocity. He had stabbed a man on a Friday, and a few drops of the blood of the wound had fallen on his lips, by which he had broken the precepts of "Holy Church," in having tasted animal food on a fast day! The *murder* did not seem to awaken in his conscience any feeling of remorse at all—not one atom—he would have done the same tomorrow, but an accidental violation of the canons of "Mother Church" excited all his fears! I read only last night in the newspaper an account of a visit paid by a strict high churchman to a little meeting of Plymouth Brethren, and I was

amused with the guilt that evidently rested on the writer's conscience in having been found in such an assembly. He tells us, in the first place, that he was not quite well enough to sit out the usual long service in the church; and in the second place that he had been to a celebration of the "Eucharist" in the morning, and therefore, he thought that for once he might be pardoned for indulging his curiosity; his mind was, however, evidently burdened with the weight of his heinous sin. There are men in England, to whom it would be one of the highest crimes and misdemeanors to worship God with the most holy of His servants as long as they did not meet within walls which had been superstitiously consecrated. Singular, indeed, are the ideas which many men have of transgression. But such is not God's view of sin. Half of those things which mere ecclesiastics condemn are not sins at all. To break the commandments of men may be virtuous; to kick against the conventionalities of a man-made church may be an evidence of enlightenment; to refuse homage to a proud hierarchy may be a bounden duty. The chains of custom, the fetters of fashion, the manacles of priest craft, are to be scorned by all who claim the right of manhood; to break them in sunder is no sin!

Sin is a lack of conformity to the will of God; sin is disobedience to God's command; sin is a forgetfulness of the obligations of the relation which exist between the creature and the Creator. This is the very essence of sin. Injustice to my fellow creature is truly sin, but its essence lies in the fact that it is sin against *God* who constituted the relation which I have violated. It is surprising, when we talk with persons who profess that they have forsaken their sins, how very seldom they will give you a distinctly spiritual definition of sin. I believe they understand it in their hearts, but their understandings come short of the desired point. Ask them the question, "What sin has most troubled you?" Or, "What in your sin most

distressed you?" You will be amazed at their replies. Seldom enough will they answer that sin is obnoxious to them because it is an offense against God—rather they will light on some one offense, and indicate that as the weight which lies heaviest. One very sincere young man told me that nothing had previously pricked his conscience until he upset an oil can in the warehouse where he was working, and in foolish fear of his master, denied that he had done so. He felt that he had told a lie, and was so overwhelmed with a sense of his meanness, that he felt thoroughly degraded, and was led to search his heart and to make the discovery of the corruption of his nature. It did not appear to have occurred to him up till that moment that he had been living wrongly in living without God, or that he was acting meanly in his ungrateful neglect of his Maker to whom he owed his hearty service. Sin, through all those years, only meant to him mean things towards his fellow mortals. By God's grace he now knows how ill it is to rebel against his God.

This last week an esteemed brother minister was telling me that in speaking to a man who professed to have been converted, he asked him which sin remained as a load upon his mind. "Well," said the man, "I have to see after cows, and I have often beaten the cows very badly." "What do you do now?" "Oh, I coax them instead of beating them." Now, I have no doubt that in his peculiar calling, cruelty to animals would be most strikingly laid upon his conscience, but the pastor had to say to him, "Yes, quite so, but the great sin in your fault is that the cows are God's creatures, and that He is angry if we treat His creatures unmercifully." The guilt lies in all our offenses in our disobedience to the good Lord who has a claim to be served by us with all our heart, and soul, and strength. Conscience readily enough tells us we are wrong if we defraud our fellow men, but if we rob *God*, how feebly does the moral sense upbraid us! If we were ungrateful to our parents or

friends, we should feel that we had done a grievous wrong, but we confess that we are ungrateful to God, and yet our shame is not as deep as a true sense of wrong would produce. If we were disloyal to our country, and rebellious against its laws, we should feel it to be a great crime—but some of us remain in disloyalty to the King of kings, and in disobedience to the best laws that were ever framed, and yet our spiritual treason does not strike us with horror. David touched the center of the matter when he said, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." Sin is a lack of conformity to the will of God! It is a breach either in imagination, or desire, or word, or action of the divine law! It is, to repeat the words I have used before, a forgetfulness of the true relation which exists between a creature and the Creator! It is but right that He who made us should have our service; it is a great and intolerable wrong that, being created by God, we yet refuse to yield to His will. It is but right that He who is so good to us should have our love—it is sin that, living upon God's goodness we do not return to Him our heart's affection. It is but right that, being sustained by divine beneficence from day to day, we should give to Him constant thankfulness, but, being so sustained, we do not thank Him, and herein lies the very soul of sin. Let it be remembered that tens of thousands of persons in this so-called Christian land live in utter neglect of God. If there were no God, it would not in any way affect the lives of most men—they live precisely as if there were none. "God is not in all their thoughts." They never pause over an action, and ask, "Will God be angry with this?" They are never moved to the performance of virtue by the reflection that God will approve it. There is no God to them, though the table is loaded with the bounties of His providence; no God even though the sick chamber is made to feel the terror of His rod; no God to them though they walk in all the fields of nature, and behold

evidences of Deity on every side; no God though they might see His finger in every event of their lives.

They live like brutes in this respect, and alas, many of them die the same—without God, without hope, earth grubbers buried in the earth. Multitudes of men who are occasionally stirred with the thought of God, yet, nevertheless, as often as they can, forget Him. They cannot quite be without reflections upon the existence of the Deity and their own relation to Him, but still it is so unpleasant a thought, and so contrary to the general set of their nature, that they shake it off as much as possible, and plunge into the frivolities and dissipation's of pleasure, or into the stormy seas of care and trouble in business—into anything so that they may be able to be clear of the undesirable remembrance of their Maker. If they hear a peculiarly earnest sermon, they resolve to remember their Creator, but then they have resolved before, and they find it as easy to forget now as then. Sometimes an arrow from the eternal One sticks in their loins, and oh, what crafts and arts are practiced to get that arrow out! How they would, if they could, escape from conviction, and continue light-hearted and frivolous in forgetfulness of their God, His law, His justice, and the coming throne before which all the creatures shall be summoned! Yes, and even when men are compelled to think of God, yet, for all that, they go on sinning; they think of Him, and yet violate His commands; acknowledge His presence, and yet do despite to His love. Ah, brothers and sisters, it is a strange thing! It shows what a monster, what a diabolical miracle sin is, that God should be around us all the day long, and yet before His very face we should dare to say and think, and do that which is contrary to His will, although a word could crush us as the moth is crushed, although His will could sink us into the profoundest hell. What words shall denounce the arrogance and impudence of sin? Who shall sufficiently

condemn an evil which defies Jehovah to His face, and hurls defiance at the thundering God? This it is which makes sin so much sin—that it is not sin against God's *creatures*, an indirect thing, but it is high treason against the Majesty of God Himself, it is a defiance of Him to His face, a stabbing of the Godhead so far as man can do it, to the very heart. This is sin.

Now, in the light of this truth of God, pausing just a minute let me ask the believer to humble himself very greatly on account of sin. That I have not loved my God with all my heart; that I have not trusted Him with all my confidence; that I have not given Him the glory due unto His name; that I have not acted as a creature should do, much less as a *new* creature is bound to do; that, receiving priceless mercies, I have made so small a return—let me confess this in dust and ashes, and then bless the name of the atoner who, by His precious blood, has put even this away, so that it shall not be mentioned against us any more forever.

Let me invite the unconverted to reflect upon their state in the light of this truth of God. If sin consisted only in dishonesty, in lying, in swearing, in drunkenness, many of you might plead not guilty, and it might go well with you; but if the sin which will bring upon you the punishment of hell is a neglect of God, a lack of love to Him, then where are you? You who, with the Pharisee, could say, "Lord, I thank You that I am not as other men," where are you? Why, this shows you that your heart may be vile and filthy, and you, yourself, may be condemned while your outward conduct may be very commendable, and all who know you may be praising you for your consistency. Let this truth of God, then, shine right into your souls, and as you see it to be a truth, and see yourself exposed by it, remember—

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

Fly to it, and make this the unceasing prayer of your heart, "Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great; blot it out for Jesus' sake."

II. In the second place, the question, **HOW IS THE FIXEDNESS OF SIN WHICH IS DECLARED IN THE TEXT PROVEN?**

The prophet tells us that man's sinfulness is as much fixed in him as an inscription carved with an iron pen in granite. How is this fixedness proven? It is proven in two ways in the text, namely, that it is engraved upon the tablets of their heart, and secondly, upon the horns of their altar. It clearly proves how deeply evil is fixed in man, when we reflect that sin is in the very *heart* of man! Man loves sin. Sin is not an accident to man, a ditch into which he falls because he cannot help it, but sin is the subject of man's deliberate preference. Man selects evil and rejects good. If a man, for a while, falls into a habit, and yet that habit yields him no satisfaction, you may very readily break him of it; but when a man finds his habit to be pleasant to his nature, and even dear to him, you may rest assured that you are not likely to turn him from it. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin or the leopard his spots; when a sin becomes intertwisted with the roots of the affections, you cannot uproot it; when the leprosy eats deep into the heart of humanity, who can expel it? It becomes therefore a hopeless case, as far as human power is concerned. Since sin reigns and rules in man's affections, it is deeply ingrained indeed.

My unconverted hearer, the sin of forgetting God is in your heart, you know it is. You do not like to think of Him. It is not your desire to be obedient to Him. Your pleasure lies in quite another direction. You know very well that when you take up the Bible in the evening, and begin to read it, it is a dreadfully dry book; you have no interest in it. And when you go to a place

of worship you find no pleasure in it; your heart does not go after God's praise—you are like the mouse which crept into the church, and finding hymn books very dry nibbling, was glad to get away again. The larder suited her better, and so it does you. The music hall, the ballroom, and the theater are more to your taste, because there you will not be worried with the things of God. God, and holiness, and heaven, and hell, and eternity, and the atonement— why these things are old and cheerless sounds to you; you have heard them many, many times, but they ring no music into your ears; they rather beat like muffled drums in a funeral march! As soon expect a stream to flow uphill as look for a natural heart seeking after God. If it were right in this place to talk of certain sins, there are many who would blush and hide their face, and say, "I pray that I may never fall into them," and yet they close not their ears when the evil is recited, but listen with evident interest. When we read police reports and divorce reports, we should be deeply pained and made to shudder, were it not that our evil heart of unbelief is hardened towards evil. Everybody knows that the light literature of the day, which is pretty freely spiced with shameful sin, goes down readily, and second and third editions are called for. Your very decent and moral people like a precious mouthful of scandal or uncleanness to give a flavor to their reading. Yes, there is a love of sin in the heart, a love of everything that is contrary to God, and there is a forgetfulness, a distaste, even a *hatred* to thoughts concerning the great Father of Spirits. Oh, if you loved God, you would not live without prayer as some of you do! If you loved God, you would not repeat forms of prayer as some of you do! If you loved God, you would talk to your Father without your book. My child never reads a book to me when he wants anything, but he comes with his mouth and his heart ready at once, without any teaching from his brother, to ask me for what he needs. If you loved God, you would not live day

by day without speaking of Him, without meditating upon His glorious works, and without seeking after fellowship and communion with Him! But, inasmuch as you love Him not who is so worthy, and who by such gentle ways woos your love, who shall deny that your lack of love to God is deeply engraved in the very center of your heart, and cut into your nature itself?

The second proof the prophet gives of the fixedness of human sin is that it was *written on the horns of their altars*. When people are bad, at their best they must be very bad, and such were the men of Judah. They sinned in their very religion. These people sinned by setting up idols and departing from Jehovah— we sin in quite another way. When you get the unconverted man to be *religious*—which is a very *easy* thing, what form does the religion take? Frequently he prefers that which most gratifies his taste, his hearing, or his sight. Yes, of course he does not object to a religion which is produced and assisted by painted windows, praising machines, elegant tailoring, and fine music! Men's carnal appetites are pleased with these things, and it is gratifying to human nature to discover that such things may be called religion. The fact is that there is no more true religion in fine music than in discord, and no more genuine worship in a cathedral than in a hovel! Men might as well look at vestments, and windows, and carvings in the artificers' shops where they are made—and there would be quite as much devotion as in looking at them in the place where they are fixed! Others think if their ears are pleased with listening to an eloquent discourse, they are worshipping God. He who can speak well is, to them, as one who makes a goodly sound on a pleasant instrument. Their religion is to admire elocution, but there is no religion in that; there can be no more divine grace in listening to an eloquent minister, than in listening to an eloquent parliamentary orator. If your *heart* is touched, that is the worship of God; if your heart is drawn to

God, that is the service of God, but if it is the mere ringing of the words, and the falling of the periods, and the cadence of the voice that you regard, why, sirs, you do not worship God, and on the very horns of your altars are your sins! You are bringing a delight of your own sensuous faculties, and putting that in the place of true faith and love, and then saying to your soul, "I have pleased God," whereas you have only pleased yourself.

When men become serious in religion, and look somewhat to the inward, they then defile the Lord's altar by relying upon their own righteousness. Nothing is more pleasing to human nature than the attempt to do something by which it may merit salvation at the hand of God. God thunders out, "By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified," and in the teeth of that, millions of men say, "We *will* be justified by the works of the law!" So, coming to God with the pretense of worshipping Him, they offer Him that *which He abhors,* and give the lie to Him in all His solemn declarations. If God says that by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified, and man declares, "But I *will* be so justified," he makes God a liar—whether he knows it or not, his sin has that within it. Man is much like a silkworm—he is a spinner and weaver by nature; a robe of righteousness is worked out for him, but he will not have it—he will spin for himself, and like the silkworm, he spins, and spins, and he only spins himself a shroud. All the righteousness that a sinner can make will only be a shroud in which to wrap up his soul, his *destroyed* soul—for God will cast him away who relies upon the works of the law.

In other ways men stain the horns of their altars. Some do it by carelessness. Some of you who come here are filled with vain thoughts. I thank God that I have not to complain of inattentive audiences, but still how often during prayer your hearts are anywhere but at the throne of God? And when the

sacred song is rising up to the Majesty of heaven, your lips are moving, but your hearts are not praising God. Ah, my friends, if secret things were testified abroad, how many times it would be seen that the horns of your altar have been stained by irreverence and carelessness! Those lips must be depraved indeed which even in *prayer* and *praise* still continue to sin.

The horns of our altars are defiled by hypocrisy. Into our churches there will come men who, like Demas and Judas, intrude themselves, uncalled, sitting at the Master's table. They are baptized into His name, and yet for all that are hollow and rotten, deceivers and deceived. You may have seen two fencers practicing their art, and noticed how they seem to be seeking each other's death—how they strike and thrust as though they were earnestly contending for life, but after the show is over, they sit down and shake hands and are good friends. Often so it is in your prayers and confessions; you will acknowledge your sins, and profess to hate them, and make resolutions against them, but it is all outward show— fencing, not real fighting—and when the fencing is over, the soul shakes hands with its old enemy, and returns to its former ways of sin. Oh, this foul hypocrisy is a staining of the horns of the altar with a vengeance! But I shall not detain you longer. The fact is clear that men do this, and the inference is also logical that if men love sin in their hearts, and if even in their religion they still perpetrate sin, then it must be deeply engraved in them as with the point of a diamond.

III. Thirdly and briefly, **WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THIS?**

How did sin get such a firm footing in humanity? How is it that the evil one has so stormed the city of Mansoul as to entrench himself in the impregnable castle of the heart, and bid the black banner float thereon? The answer is, first, we must never forget the fall. Certain theologians ignore the fall—but for all that, it remains the saddest and the second greatest event

in human history. We are *fallen*. We are none of us today as God made us. "God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions." Our first parent was the perfect man, but he polluted the fountain of life, and "Behold," as David said, "we are born in sin and shaped in iniquity"; in sin do our mothers conceive us. The human judgment is out of balance—it uses false weights and false measures. "It puts darkness for light, and light for darkness." The human will is no longer supple, as it should be to the divine will; our neck is naturally as an iron sinew, and will not bow to Jehovah's golden scepter. Our affections also are twisted away from their right bent; whereas we ought to have been seeking after Jesus, and casting out the tendrils of our affections towards Him, we cling to anything but the right, and climb upon anything but the true. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint." Human nature is like a magnificent temple all in ruins. Where there ought to be shouts of sacred joy and rising paeans of incessant praise, you can hear the howling of the dragon, and the hooting of the owl. Magnificence is there, but for all that, the ruin is complete. This accounts for the depth and fixedness of sin in us—that it is a matter of birth. Original sin, let it be denied and explained away as it may, remains a great truth of God, and there are problems in human history which never can be explained without the belief in it. Indeed, every man is in himself such a problem, that if you deny his original depravity, you miss the key to his life; but if you believe that doctrine, you may then understand what manhood is; and you are on the right track towards getting to find out how manhood can be made better and holier.

In addition, however, to our natural depravity, there comes in, in the second place, *our habits of sin.* Well may sin be deeply engraved in the man who has for 20, 40, 50, or perhaps 70 years, continued in his iniquity. Put the wool into the scarlet dye, and if it lies there but a week, the color will be so ingrained in the

fabric that you cannot get it out; but if you keep it there for so many *years*, how shall you possibly be able to bleach it? Man has continued in sin; therefore the prophet says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well." Use is second nature. Nature originally is bad, but the use comes in as a second mischief, and makes us doubly inclined towards evil.

You must remember, in addition to this, that sin is a most clinging and defiling thing. Who does not know that if a man sins once, it is much easier to sin that way the next time? No, that he is much more inclined towards that sin? This is conspicuous in certain sins of the flesh which we all condemn; let any person once have given way, and it becomes an awful struggle—a struggle in which the major part are defeated altogether when they attempt it—to break loose from their bands of lasciviousness. I mention that one sin because its power to return upon us is so conspicuous, but it is an illustration of the same thing in every other sin. If you fall into covetousness, you will find it very hard to be generous. And if you *continue* to be grinding and grasping, generosity will become impossible. The muscles of the arm, if you never exert them except in one fashion, will become set so that you cannot move them—like the Indian Fakir who held his arm aloft so long that he could not take it down again. Man, continuing in sin, becomes fixed in its habit. Only the other day we read of a great millionaire in New York who was once weak enough to resolve to give a beggar a *penny*. He had grown old in covetousness, and he stopped himself just as he was about to bestow the gift, saying, "I should like to give you the penny, but you see, I should have to lose the interest of it forever, and I could not afford that." Habit grows upon a man. Everybody knows that when he has been making money, if he indulges the propensity to acquire, it will become a perfectly tyrannical master ruling

his entire being. Therefore the reason why sin being in the nature, and secondly, coming upon us in the use and the habit, and thirdly, being in itself a thing which naturally clings to us and gets a dominance over us, it is written within us as with the point of a diamond.

I may add that *the prince of the power of the air,* the evil spirit, takes care, as far as he can, to add to all this. He chimes in with every suggestion of fallen nature. If we say "One," he is always ready to say, "Two." If we want a lie to help us in any of our plans, he will be at our beck and call at once. He knows when to use the bellows when he sees that the fire is beginning to burn; he will never let the tinder lie idle for lack of sparks, nor the ground lie waste for lack of the seeds of thorns and thistles. He has an aptitude for dealing with human nature for his own purposes, and so is never far away when a sin is to be produced. When we begin to fasten a nail, he is ready to drive it home and clinch it too, so that the sin of Judah may be written as with an iron pen, and engraved as with the point of a diamond.

Up to now, my dear brothers and sisters, I have had to enlarge upon a very dreary statement. What I have said I feel persuaded is true, but I feel no satisfaction in speaking it. I have declared what I believe to be the truth of God as it is in Jesus, but it is a burden to have to state these things. Let no man imagine that we are the inventors of these doleful doctrines. If they are not true, they certainly are among the most miserable of human conceptions, but if they are true, it is among the most honest things that man can do to tell people plainly of them, that they may be prepared against them. But we will not so finish— we will advance to a more cheering topic!

IV. Our fourth point will be, **WHAT IS THE CURE FOR ALL THIS?** Sin thus stamped into us, thus ingrained into our nature, can it ever be removed?

It *must* be, or we cannot enter heaven, for there shall by no means enter within those pearly gates anything that defiles. None but the perfect can enter into the land of the perfect, where the thrice holy God is the center of a perfectly holy company. We must be cleansed and purified, but how can it be done? It can only be done by a supernatural process. You cannot do it yourself; the dead in the grave can sooner raise themselves than you, who are accustomed to do evil, can learn to do good! Even those who are saved by divine grace will tell you that they can do nothing without the Spirit of God, much less can you who are dead in sin. If the vessel that is well rigged and manned cannot move upon the waters without the breath of heaven, much less can the unformed timber which lies in the merchant's yard make itself into a ship, and then cross the seas. If the living Christian needs divine assistance, much more do you. You have destroyed yourselves, but your help is not in yourselves. In God your help is to be found. Your only help—to make short matter of it—lies in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became the Son of man that He might lift the sons of men up from their natural degradation and ruin. How does Jesus Christ then, take away these deeply-inscribed lines of sin from human nature? I answer, He does it first in this way—if our heart is like granite, and sin is written on it, Christ's ready method is to take that heart away. "A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you." Has it ever struck you what a wonderful thing it is for God to promise to give man a new heart? If you get a tree and saw a branch or two off, you may regret that the branches are gone, but a new branch may come, and though you may grow a new branch on the tree, you could not obtain a new heart for it. When once the tree gets thoroughly rotten in the center, you must give it up as hopeless; you cannot put new sap into it. But here God promises by the hand of His Son that He will give us new hearts,

hearts in which there shall be no sin, hearts which shall have no tendency towards evil, but which shall be pure hearts, hearts in every part renewed and filled with divine love, perfect and right, and pure and good—a copy of His own heart! The Lord Jesus Christ has for many now present worked this miracle; He has given them the new heart, and though the old heart is still there, contending and fighting, yet the new heart will get the victory. We have now *new* loves, *new* hates—the name of God is now the sweetest bell that ever rings, the thought of God's law is marrow and fatness to us, a sense of God's love is like honey dropping from the honeycomb. Now, the thought of hell, solemn as it is, does not alarm us; the thought of heaven is bright and lustrous, and cheers us in traversing this wilderness. Now, to muse upon eternity, and the fact that we shall see the Lord forever, face to face, is our daily delight. We are not what we *ought* to be, nor what we *want* to be, but still our leanings and inclinations are towards better things. The new heart has its helm turned in an opposite direction from that in which the old heart was steering; we are sailing under a new flag now; we have enlisted under a new prince, and by God's grace we shall conquer, and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a part of the covenant of grace, and a part of His gospel that Jesus can give to us hearts in which there shall not be this tendency to sin, and so the deep-seated sinfulness of our nature shall be overcome.

Next to that, inasmuch as the guiltiness of sin is as permanent as sin itself, Jesus Christ is able to take our guilt away. His dying upon the cross is the means by which the filthiest sinner out of hell can be made white as the angels of God, and that, too, in a single instant. You understand the doctrine of the atonement, but let me sound it in your ears again. Sin is a thing which God must punish; the eternal laws of the universe demand that there shall never be an offense

committed against the rules of God which shall escape without a penalty. The penalty of sin is death, and God has never seen fit to mitigate this— His justice makes it perpetual. The Lord has been pleased to open a way of mercy by sending His only begotten Son into this world as our substitute. He became man, and He suffered for His people what *they* ought to have suffered. He endured at the hand of God what all the redeemed ought to have endured. Now, God, at this day, never pardons a sin without having first punished it—punished it on Christ for us. God never punishes the man for whom Christ died, but all besides must bear their iniquity. If you believe in Jesus Christ, then Jesus Christ died for you, and God cannot put two to death for one offense, nor can He ask for payment twice for one debt—you are therefore free. Christ paid the debts of all His people, and obtained their full discharge when He rose again from the dead. And now every soul that believes in Him is clear at the bar of divine justice, because it is written, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin."

See then, my brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ can take away the deeply-engraved inscription of our sin, and can remove the horrible stains of our iniquity—justly remove them through what He has suffered on our behalf. The Holy Spirit also comes in—the new nature being given, and sin being forgiven, the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us, as a Prince in His palace, as a God in His temple. Oh, wondrous mystery, that God should dwell in a human heart! He who fills heaven and earth—whom all worlds cannot comprehend! He, before whom angels bow with veiled faces, deigns to make Himself a habitation within the body of the man who trusts in Him! If you are now relying alone on Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit is in you this morning, and, being there, He controls your passions—passions which otherwise would master you; He

rules your will, a stubborn thing, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; He guides your affections, wandering things, like wild asses of the desert, not to be tamed; He sits, this day, within your soul, as God's lieutenant in the kingdom of your humanity, ruling, preventing, directing, and making you meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Do I hear any say, "Then, I would to God that I may experience the divine process—the new nature given which is regeneration, the washing away of sin which constitutes pardon and justification, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which insures final perseverance and complete sanctification. Oh, how can I have these precious things?" You may have them, whoever you may be, by simply believing in Jesus! Does it seem too simple? Try and you will find it effectual. The most potent remedies for disease are not always the most elaborate; the simplest may often be the most effectual. I tell you, you who gad about after your ceremonies, and repentance, and tears—you will never get in all these that which you can have by simply coming to Jesus and trusting in Him! Now have done with your own doings; cast yourself on Him who has done everything for you; spin no more, but take the raiment already woven; work no more, but take the ransom already paid; strive no more in your own energy after the works of the law, but take the great accomplished work which Jesus Christ has performed. Believe and live! These are the words which God emblazons across the brow of truth, which I would gladly write across the brow of heaven itself, which I would gladly have thundered out of every wave, whispered by every gale, and spoken by every breath of air. BELIEVE AND LIVE! Trust Christ and live! The remedy will meet the disease—this heavenly chisel will cut out the diamond-worked inscription; this hammer which Christ wields will dash to pieces the granite upon which the pen of iron has written your sin. Trust in the Lord to save you, and you shall

yet be made as Adam was at the first—in the image of God, and you shall stand before the eternal throne, among the white-robed, pure as they, among the celestials as heavenly as they, and near to God, even made a partaker of the divine nature, "having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." God bless you, for Christ's sake.

813 THE PRIVILEGED MAN – EZEK. 16:9-14

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, May 31st, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Then washed I you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered work, and shod you with badgers' skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. I adorned you also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered work; you did eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and you were exceedingly beautiful, and you did prosper into a kingdom. And your renown went forth among the heathen for your beauty: for it was perfect through your comeliness, which I had put upon you, says the Lord God." — Ezekiel 16:9-14

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Ezekiel 16:9-14]

THE ROOT OF Israel's nation was originally a lone man whose family and dependents formed a small Bedouin tribe wandering throughout the plains of Canaan. God separated and selected Abraham, who was in no way distinct from others in his parentage, and declared that in him, and in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. When the tribe had somewhat multiplied, God found them in Egypt, a herd of slaves helplessly crushed beneath the foot of Pharaoh; they

were sorely burdened with labors for which they received no reward; they were without spirit to resent the oppressions of their taskmasters, and without power to succeed had the energy been there. Yet God brought them out of Egypt; He led them through the wilderness, chased out powerful nations before them, settled them in the most fertile country, and there multiplied them at such an extraordinary rate, and enriched and endowed them with such power that the little kingdom of Israel became famous among the nations of the earth, and in the days of Solomon its scepter was respected far and wide. The nations of the earth stood still, and wondered how so small a monarchy had come to be so exceedingly rich and great. It was entirely through the favor of Jehovah that these great blessings had been received; He had a favor to Abraham's race; He revealed Himself to them and not to others; He chose them to be His people, and made them the custodians of His law. His worship was kept up among them, and while they were faithful to Him, they were a happy and a prosperous people whose renown went forth to Tarshish and the isles—and the excellence of whose laws and government was respected and admired even by such distant nations as those which were governed by the queen of the South. The beauty of the nation consisted entirely in what God had done for it—its comeliness was a comeliness which Jehovah had put upon it; it was a nation wealthy, intelligent, free and upon the whole, pure and happy as long as it remained faithful to its God.

Our business, this morning, is not with that nation, but ourselves. Our meditations, to be profitable, must be personal; vainly do we blame departed nations; usefully may we judge ourselves. Children of God, I shall address myself to you. God has done great things for us of which we are glad; all that God did for His Israel was but a type and shadow of what He has done for His own beloved and redeemed ones whom He has

distinguished beyond all men who dwell upon the face of the earth! I shall ask you, O you sons of God, *to contemplate the bounties of the Lord towards His people;* and then, secondly, for a short time, *to draw reflections from your contemplations.*

I. Let us, each man for himself, sitting in this house before the Lord, **REVIEW THE LORD'S LOVING-KINDNESS**, and contemplate the amazing bounties which have come to us from the blessed fount of His grace.

To help your meditations, let me remind you where you were when divine Loving Kindness pitched upon you effectually, and you knew its power experimentally in your own consciences. You were, as others are, lovers of sin, having no desires towards righteousness and salvation; you had sinned, and you continued in sin, and found delight in sin; you were defiled, depraved, condemned, and ready to perish. Like the infant whom Ezekiel has described, you lay cast out and forsaken, polluted in your own blood, you had no power to cleanse yourself, neither were there to be found any friends through whom cleansing might possibly come to you: you were both loathsome and helpless. As the loathsomeness necessarily would have involved your eternal ruin, so your helplessness took away from you all hope of eternal safety. Some of you had plunged into open sin; and others who had been kept from that, yet had a den of unclean birds within their hearts. Our past lives will not do to look at—our state before conversion is something to be blushed over; we should repent of it in dust and ashes. And yet the eye of Jehovah had fixed itself upon us from before the foundations of the world, and when He saw us ruined, first by Adam's fall, and afterwards by our own practical iniquity, He did not take away that eye of regard, nor did His heart change towards us. He loved us, loved us still, loved us when there was nothing in us to love—nothing to evoke His complacency, nothing even that could call forth His

benevolence, for our sin was such a counter power against our misery, that if our misery might have made Jehovah pity us, our sin must have made Him hate us! His love was utterly causeless by anything within us, but it sprang up spontaneously from the mysterious wellhead of His infinite goodness. Blessed be God, that when we were lost, and lost forever, sovereign mercy interposed.

Let us consider the list of the favors received in the order in which we find them set forth in the text. According to the prophet, one of the first gifts of the divine favor is *washing*. "Then I washed you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you." Now, remember, you who have been immersed in the—

"Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,"

remember when you were washed, and thoroughly washed, and sing aloud—

"'Tis from the mercy of our God
That all our hopes begin;
'Tis by the water and the blood
Our souls are washed from sin."

"But," says the apostle, and what a blessed "but" it is, and what a weight of meaning there is in it, "But you are washed." He had been giving a very fearful description of what some of the saints had been, "Such were some of you," and then he puts this in at the end of it, "But you are washed," as if the being washed had taken away whatever defilement might have been there. Remember, beloved, when you were first washed? Recall the hour when, believing in Jesus Christ, you felt in a moment

that you were saved? What bliss was crowded into that hour! Your acceptance in the beloved was sealed upon your heart by the Holy Spirit! You enjoyed a peace with God which passed all understanding—the result of pardoned sin! Remember that day of blessing, and be grateful. But I want you to remember that you are washed this morning; you are now in the sight of God as a believer without a spot, for "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Do not look upon your cleansing as a thing of the past, to be forgotten, for you are at this present moment "clean every whit" in the sight of God through Jesus' blood. There is no sin in God's book recorded against the believer. "Who is he who condemns, now that Christ has died?" Oh, perfect justification, how shall I prize you enough? Oh, perfect pardon, to what shall I compare with you? These two things put together are enough to make a heaven upon earth even to the most disconsolate and afflicted of the sons of men! "Then washed I you with water." In this respect we may say that we have been washed twice—first with the blood by which the guilt of sin is removed, and then by the energetic power of the Holy Spirit. We have been washed from the impurity and power of sin, so that we are clean in a double sense before God; and here is the beauty of it, it is done thoroughly, "Yea, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you." Your depravity is not gone, your old nature is not removed; it shall be before long—but your old guilt is completely gone, and your present criminality is utterly blotted out—

"In your Surety you are free,
His dear hands were pierced for thee;
With His spotless vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One!
Oh, the heights and depths of grace.

Shining with meridian blaze;
Here the sacred records show
Sinners black, but comely, too."

The sins of 20 years ago are drowned beneath the billows of the Red Sea of Jesus' atoning blood; the sins of yesterday have shared the same fate, and the sins of today the same: "I thoroughly washed your blood from you." Now, believer, let not the devil rob you this morning, of a sense of your *complete* cleansing; remember what you *were*, but at the same time remember you are not now what you once were. "Old things have passed away; all things have become new." Jesus Christ has said, "I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities." I say *Jesus* has said it, said it to you by His Holy Spirit bearing witness in your heart. Come afresh to the cross, and look up, and as you see those dear wounds, sweet fountains of immaculate perfection, rejoice that it is written, "Yes, I washed you with water, I thoroughly purged your blood from you."

The next mercy is *anointing*. Observe in the text, "I anointed you with oil." As soon as a man is cleansed, he becomes fit for the Lord's service; one of the first instincts of a forgiven sinner is to become a servant in the house of his pardoning God. Listen to David in the 51st Psalm: "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You." Forgiven himself, he desires to be a preacher to others, but before we can serve God, we must be anointed to the service; God will have no unanointed priest in His temple. His Holy Spirit is the anointing which He bestows upon every one of the pardoned; not to me as the preacher, alone, is this anointing given, though I desire to have it more and more for your sakes, but for every one of you is this unction appointed! "You have an anointing from the Holy One." Your eyes are

anointed with eye salve that you may see and discern the mystery of fellowship with God; your hands have been anointed, that you may be laborers together with God, and you have been anointed in heart, in body, soul, and spirit, that your entire man, filled with the indwelling Deity, may be consecrated to noblest ends. I pray God to give His children to feel this anointing more and more. We believe in no priest-craft, no setting apart of any set of men who are to minister in holy things as substitutes for their brethren—but *all* you who are saints are alike kings and priests unto God! Though by nature sinners who would have been in hell but for divine grace, you are now made priests to God to minister before His throne; there, amidst the fires of Gehennam, would have been your everlasting portion, but there, within the veil where the glory which excels reveals its radiance, is your proper position today by the rights which sovereign grace has bestowed upon you. "I washed you with water, and I anointed you with oil." Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I want you to realize these privileges now. As I said about cleansing so, yes, I say again—do not let Satan make you think it to be a myth, or that it does not belong to you at this precise instant of time. The reality and present character of divine blessings is a point never to be forgotten. Today you are justified; you are altogether without a blot in God's sight as He sees you in His dear Son; you are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing as you stand in Jesus; and then at this hour you are anointed to priesthood by the Holy Spirit. Let not Satan tell you that you are not so called and qualified, for as a child of God you are indeed a partaker of the Holy Spirit. Go to your knees in prayer as an anointed priest; go to your Sunday school this afternoon, or street preaching, or whatever else may be your form of ministry—go to it as having unction from God, an anointing to do the work which the Lord has appointed you to do! In the double blessedness

of cleansing as a washed sinner, and qualification as an anointed one, rejoice in the Lord your God!

But, my dear brothers and sisters, our heavenly Father stops nowhere when He once begins to lavish forth His mercy; He abounds in His loving-kindnesses, and therefore I ask your attention to the next covenant mercy—He *clothes* His people. The Holy Spirit in this passage seems to have exhausted human imagery in order to set forth the sumptuous apparel in which God has been pleased to clothe His people. Four modes of description are used. First, it is said, "I clothed you also with embroidered work." This was the work which was worked by the needles of the well-skilled women of Israel—most delicate and cunning work; garments intended for glory and beauty, such as the priests' vestments, were made by dexterous fingers long accustomed to the needle. Now, when I read that God clothes His people with embroidered work, it teaches me that the righteousness with which God covers His people is a work of labor, of skill, of care, of thought; not merely labor (though our Lord Jesus Christ labored well, a very Hercules was He in toil); not rough labor, thoughtless, and unskilled; not the labor of the hammer, but of the needle in a fair and well-trained hand. The wisdom of our God was exercised about the way of justifying a sinner; great thoughts of Jehovah went out about the methods of making unrighteous ones righteous, and causing the unjust to become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus! Each stitch of embroidery demands its thought; each motion of the needle is a matter of care and anxiety. And so in every part of the covenant of grace, divine thoughts were abundantly exercised. See how resplendently God's attributes are all seen in the way of justification. In the robe with which Christ has covered us, it is impossible to say which of the divine attributes are most to be seen; there is His *justice*, for all that the law demands, it receives in the sacrifice of Jesus; His *mercy* is

equally manifest, for He passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin; there is His *power* sustaining the Savior, while, at the same time He smites Him; there is His *wrath* boiling forth against iniquity, and His *love* resplendent like a fair jewel in the midst of it all! It is an *embroidered* work, stitch within stitch, with many a cunning twist and wise devices and dainty pieces of curious work. Angels have looked at it, and they never saw such embroidered work before, and you and I regard it, and we glory that it is matchless. In heaven as we shall examine it, thread by thread, and stitch by stitch, we shall burst forth into fresh songs of adoring praise and say, "Indeed, most gracious God, You have clothed us with embroidered work! What sumptuous apparel! What skill! What wisdom! What power! What graces are blended in the robe of righteousness with which God has covered His people!

Child of God, you are wearing it *today*, and if Jacob puts on Joseph a garment of many colors because he loved him better than his brothers, stand up and think what a garment your heavenly Father has put on *you* because He loves you so much! A garment of embroidered work has He put upon you this day because He loves you more than angels, and more than archangels, for unto none of these did He ever say—

> "'Yes, I clothed you with embroidered work.'
> How far the heavenly robe exceeds,
> What earthly princes wear.
> These ornaments, how bright they shine.
> How white the garments are.
> Strangely, my soul, are you arrayed
> By the great Sacred Three.
> In sweetest harmony of praise
> Let all your powers agree."

Then comes the next thought, "and shod you with badgers' skin." It would be impossible, at this remote period, to guess what animal is referred to here—certainly not the animal *we* call a badger, but some creature found, I suppose, abundantly in the wilderness. It probably had spotted skin, which skin was afterwards dyed a deep purple, and used for leather. Badgers' skins were used, whatever they were, for the covering of the ark and tabernacle in the wilderness. I suppose the leather made of these skins to have been the softest, best, and most durable to be found, and that the meaning of the passage is just this—"I shod you with the best that was to be had." We know that the Jewish women were accustomed to wear shoes made with very delicate leather dyed with a deep purple color; this, of course, was for daintiness and luxury, and it is mentioned to show the great riches of the Jewish people, and the luxuries with which God had endowed them; I use the term *spiritually* today, and bid you mark the riches of the Lord's people. Moreover, behold the durability of that righteousness which God has given to us; we have to pass through a wilderness of briers and thorns, and our shoes are fit for it; our Jesus has not given us an embroidered robe for show only, but He has provided us garments which will bear the wear and toil of the pilgrimage to the skies! He has shod us right well. Sometimes He tells us that our shoes shall be as iron and brass, and that as our days are, so shall our strength be. Paul tells us of the preparation of the gospel of peace with which our feet are to be shod, and now here, the text says, "I shod you with badgers' skin." Believer, you have the best grace, the best righteousness, and the best assistance that you can possibly imagine in order to bring you safely to the right hand of God at the last! Jesus' righteousness is such that, let you tread the desert through up to the remotest age, still that righteousness shall not be worn out, for it is an everlasting righteousness—

"This spotless robe the same appears
When ruined nature sinks in years.
Nor age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is always new."

The figure, then, changes again.

The text says, "I girded you about with fine linen." May I stop a moment, and ask every believer to try to feel by the exercise of faith, that you have this embroidered robe upon you at this moment, and that these shoes are on your feet at this instant? Believe in the gifts which the covenant of grace secures you, and in Jesus Christ who is made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. But to return to the word itself, "I girded you with fine linen." That is to set forth the *purity* of the righteousness which God gives to us—linen, white and fair—fine linen, the best and most expensive fabric such as was worn by the priests alone. Child of God, you have on at this very moment, in the sight of God, the righteousness which is of God by faith, and this is so pure that God Himself sees no spot in it. It is so precious that if heaven and earth were sold, such a dress as you wear could not be bought with any price! You are this day arrayed as a priest—you *are* a priest to offer prayer and praise, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Now, do not forget this, or treat it as if I were talking mere poetry or fiction; it is so; I speak a sober fact most true and sure to faith. You do at *this* moment wear the priestly apparel, for you are made of God a priest and a king!

Then the last figure is, "I covered you with silk." One scarcely knows what the prophet here refers to, as silk does not appear to have been used in his time, but something as near to our modern silk, I suppose, as possible. And this was a *royal* fabric, soft and delicate, but rarely seen, and only found in

imperial courts. "I covered you with silk." This may represent the splendor of the saints when they appear in the robes of Christ. An angel, I suppose, must be a glorious sight, but though you would be dazzled at the sight of an *angel*, you would not be half as much surprised as an angel would at the sight of *you* as you stand arrayed in the righteousness of Christ! I have never read that God is admired in the angels, but I do read that Jesus Christ is to be admired in all them who believe. The glory of the believer is to be such that even angels, who have been used to supernal splendor, shall be amazed as they look upon the redeemed when covered with the righteousness of Christ. If you but spell this word Jehovah Tsidkenu, *The Lord Our righteousness;* if you are but to be robed about with the merit of the redeemer, then I tell you that heaven shall have no courtier before God's throne more sumptuously arrayed than you!—

"With your Savior's garment on,
You are holy as the Holy One"

Thus in the four expressions which indicate skill and care, durability and use, purity and priesthood, delicacy and royalty, we have wrapped up a mass of most precious thought—may our minds be on the alert for the working out of the thought. How grateful ought we to be to our good God for such distinguished love!

But this is not all. He who washes us, anoints us, and clothes us then *adorns* us. Observe how the Holy Spirit again seems to labor for expression to set out the ornaments which God has put upon His people, which ornaments, I suppose, represent the graces of the Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit in the regenerate man. I will not detain you an unnecessary minute over them, but ask you to look at each one with your Bibles open. "I put bracelets upon your hands." The believer being

saved becomes a worker, and when he works with the bracelets of faith and love upon his hands, how fair a worker he becomes! And, Christian, you have this honor. You work for God, trusting in God. You work for God, loving God; having no motive to constrain you but that of disinterested affection. You have these bracelets upon your hands. *"And a chain on your neck."* And what is this but the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit? That neck which once would not bend—a stiff neck, a rebellions neck with a proud obstinate iron sinew, bows itself before the Lord, and wears the easy yoke of Christ. Blessed are they to whom God has given this golden chain made of many links of humble gratitude—a meek and quiet spirit! This also has God given to the believer. If you have lost it, bemoan yourself—but certainly it is one of His gifts, and, as one of His beloved, He has bestowed it upon you. Then He speaks of a *jewel upon the forehead,* or as some read it, "the nose-jewel," for it was common with the Eastern women to wear a large golden ring or bow in the nose. Or the text may refer to a jewel which dangled from the hair upon the brow. Now, every believer has this when he is in his right state, this forehead jewel of an open confession of his Lord; this forehead jewel of a holy boldness, a conscience that gives an answer for itself, meekly, but yet without fear of men. Every believer has that dauntless courage which could beard the lion in its den for Christ; could rush through perils and through toils for Jesus; this forehead jewel God has been given to some of us, at any rate. May we always wear it, this is one of the brightest ornaments of Christians before men; when it is compared with the other ornaments, it is one of the noblest that a Christian spirit can wear. Nor is the list exhausted. *"I put earrings in your ears."* And there are no earrings more precious than these two which I will let you see. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." That is the best earring to wear in the entire world, "My

sheep hear My voice." God has given His people the earring of discernment, "a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." The other is the earring of affection, by which, hearing the voice of Jesus, they know His voice, and at once arise, and with cheerfulness follow Him. Yes, these are the ornaments of the Christian.

And then it is added, *"And I put a beautiful crown upon your head."* God will not stop halfway; His people shall wear the best of the best, and *all* of the best. He will adorn their feet with shoes of badgers' skin, and He will crown their head with a diadem of beauty. Now, heir of salvation, you are this day one of God's princes. You may be very poor; you may feel very low spirited; you may have all sorts of troubles to fight with, but you are down in the red roll of the princes of the blood—you belong to heaven's true aristocracy! Be you who you may, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are not knighted, nor made a baron, or a peer, but you are actually taken into the royal family itself. You are a *king*, and you shall reign with Jesus Christ forever and ever! "To him who overcomes will I give to sit upon My throne, even as I have overcome and am set down with My Father upon His throne." See your dignity, Christian! I say nothing to make you proud, but I would say much to make you glad in the Lord, and to make you rejoice in the mercies which He has given you! There is nothing which you could wish for, when in your spiritual senses, which you do not already possess. All your capacious powers can wish is given you in the covenant of grace. If imagination should take her utmost stretch, and fly upon the wings of the morning to the uttermost ends of all conception, yet could she not compass nor dream of what God has prepared for them who love Him. Only the Spirit can reveal to you these depths of mercy, these treasures of loving-kindness, these mountains of mercy, these hills of frankincense. You are rich to all the intents of bliss, you are rich

to the full measure of heaven and earth, for all that that covenant can give is yours today by "promises which are yes, and amen, in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us." I am a poor speaker on such a theme as this, and though I have tried to entice you so far as I can into this river of divine goodness, I have only led you up to your ankles. God's Spirit could take you far deeper, for all the mercies you have received are only just the beginnings of what are coming. Well did we sing just now—

"Glory to God for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

That is the larger part of the grace, the grace to come. The present is good, oh, how good, but the *future* is better, ah, how much better! Beyond the river there comes the best of all. Our wine does not grow weaker towards the end of the feast—He has kept the best wine until the last, and, oh, what will it be to drink at the table of the King Eternal, draughts of His blessed love, in the place where sin and trouble shall never come to intervene and break our peace? O brothers and sisters, wait awhile, your day shall come, and your enemies shall be beneath your feet, and Satan shall be trampled there, and you—

"Far from a world of grief and sin
With God eternally shut in,"

shall know what God has done, and forever has intended to do for His beloved ones!

II. Thus have I, as well as I could, set before you food for contemplation. Now, I want to **DRAW TWO OR THREE REFLECTIONS FROM THIS**, and we will have done.

The first is this—sitting down before the Lord in quiet this afternoon, reading this passage, turning over sentence by sentence, I think the emotion of the soul would express itself in words like these— "And what am I? And what is my father's house, that You have brought me here? And why this to me? Why me, Lord? Me?" Depreciate divine mercies, and you will not marvel that you receive them; appreciate them at their proper estimate, and you will wonder and weep, and wonder and love, and wonder and adore that ever such an unworthy thing as *you* should be so singularly favored.

I will not linger over the reflection—that is for your closet rather than for my pulpit; but the next one is this—what a wretched return have we made to God for these amazing benefits bestowed! There are some parts of the earth where the soil is so fruitful, that to quote the language of a certain writer, you have but to tickle it with the hoe, and it laughs with plenty; but there are other soils where you must plow and plow, and plow, and fertilize, and use all arts to get but handfuls, after all. Surely these last soils are very much like ourselves! God has done great things for us, and we have done little things for God. I picked up on the Alp side a glistening stone one day, and I noticed that the whole heap of stones which had been broken up for mending the roads was like the one which I picked up, and in it there were sparkling pieces of gold. Everyone could see that there was gold in the stone, and we asked the geologist if it were not so. Yes, all the stones with which they mend the road had gold in them. Well, but why not extract the gold? Because it was in such miserably small quantities, that it would never have paid for the extraction! Really, this is very much like ourselves; if there *are* some good thing in us, it is in such small quantities, and seems to be imbedded in such hard quartz, that God's great machinery of divine grace seems to be a waste of power, if I may so speak, when we compare the results in us

with the effort which God puts forth towards us. I know there is no waste, and in the end He will show that the means were only commensurate with the result, but as far as we now go, and can see of it, think of Christ sweating the great sweat of blood, think of Him afterwards going up and yielding Himself to die the death on the cross, the incarnate God dying for the sins of men! And the result of it is—what? A wealthy member of a church who when there is a collection, gives a four-penny piece! Did you ever see such a step from the sublime to the ridiculous as that? And yet it is so. Yes, and then take the best—*the best* of *us*. You smile because I put it in that shape, but conceive God Himself coming here on earth, bleeding and dying, and the most earnest man is the result. There is still a fall; a wretched, miserable fall from what God did down to what the most earnest of us can do for Him. This is a thing to be bemoaned and to be grieved over, for such is the debt we owe to God, that if we spend all the strength we have morning, noon, and night, and wear ourselves out in the Master's service, and had 50 such lives to give, and ended them all at the stake, yet still the sacrifice were as *nothing* compared to what is due to the infinite majesty of the love of God.

I lead you to a reflection which is sadder than these, and that reflection is How base, then, in the light of this amazing mercy does our *sin* appear! I have read of one who was extremely poor, and who was helped by a Christian man—helped again and again, and yet when the officers were out searching after the Protestant Christian, the man, to betray him for the sake of the reward, was the neighbor who had constantly eaten at his table, and who had been helped by his charity! This was brutal, that he who was so much under obligation should yet become a traitor. And yet it was only a *neighbor*. Your case is worse, believer, for you are a *friend* and more—you profess to be a *child* of God, to be in union with

Christ, and yet you have been a traitor to Jesus! O sweet Lord of my heart, and monarch of my soul, with precious blood You have sealed me as Your own, and fool that I am, that I should cast my eyes on other beauties, beauties did I call them?—other *shams*, other painted *Jezebels!* Wretch that I am to wander thus in search of vain delights; to seek after earthly joys; to set my soul on earthly loves; and let my Lord and Savior go! O you virgin souls that follow the Lamb wherever He goes, may you never wander from your spiritual chastity as some of us have done! O you whose delights are with Him still, who in the garden of nuts, and among the beds of spices have beheld His face, and seen those eyes which are like the fishponds of Heshbon by the walls of Bath-Rabbim—O you who have been enchanted with His presence, cling to His garment; keep His company, and let no enchantment of the world induce you to desert Him. But we, O what shall we do? Though like Peter we have denied Him, yet like Peter we can say, "You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus, believe not our words, but believe our *actions* this morning; look not askance upon us because of our ill manners; forget the past and clasp us to Your breast anew. Into Your precious blood cast the multitude of our offenses, and forgive us freely and graciously. Once again let the flames of Your love flash into our hearts till our hearts also grow warm, and then never, never let them become chilled again! Let us be fastened to the cross, bound with cords even to the horns of the altar, that we may be Yours in full fellowship, sweet service, and growing conformity all the days of our life.

Now, beloved, the practical result, if what I have said is carried out, will be most blessed; but to push it home, I would ask, what is there that any of us can do this morning for Christ? Since we have received so much, what can we give in return this morning? It shall be that some of you will say, "He shall

have the sweet cane which I have bought with money, and the fat of my sacrifices; if I cannot speak for Him, I will give to Him; I will let Him see that I love Him, for like the holy women, I will minister unto Him of my substance." Others of you will say, "I cannot do that, but I will speak a good word for Him this day; I will go to the school, or to the street, or to the prayer meeting, or to the Bible class, and I will try to speak to someone about his soul. If I may but paint my Master in lovely hues so that *one* heart shall be enchanted with Him, I hope He will accept what I shall try to do." Now make it a resolution that this day *something* shall be done by you for Christ; but another will say, "Alas. I cannot speak, I shall have no opportunity, but I will get me to my chamber, and I will there speak with God on Christ's behalf, and I will not let Him go unless He blesses me, and the church, and all the cause and kingdom of my Lord." Ah, beloved, Christ will take of you anything that comes from your heart, whatever the gift may be! However feeble, and weak, and insignificant it may seem to others, it shall be rich and comely to Him, if it comes from your *heart*. You owe *all* to Him! What will you render to Him? What will you do more than others? Do it not to *earn* anything, or seek a *reward*, but because He has loved you, and so love Him and serve Him in return. God give you to give the ready answer, and the acceptable answer, and may He accept it, for Jesus' sake. I wish, this morning, you *all* had a share in these mercies. Some of you have not. The mercy is that the door is not shut. "Whoever believes on the Son of God has everlasting life." Trust Jesus, and you shall be saved.—

"Come naked, and adorn your souls
In robes prepared by God,
Worked by the labors of His Son,
And dyed in His own blood!

Great God, the treasures of Your love
Are everlasting mines,
Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our sins.
The happy gates of gospel grace
Stand open night and day,
Lord, we are come to seek supplies,
And drive our needs away."

814 LIFE BY FAITH – GAL. 3:11

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 7th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"The just shall live by faith." — Galatians 3:11

THE APOSTLE QUOTES from the Old Testament, from the second chapter of Habakkuk, at the fourth verse, and thus confirms one inspired statement by another. Even the just are not justified by their own righteousness, but live by faith; it follows then most conclusively, that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God. If the best of men find no justification coming to them through their personal virtues, but stand accepted only by faith, how much more such imperfect beings, such frequent sinners as ourselves?

Men who are saved by faith become just. The operation of faith upon the human heart is to produce love, and through love, obedience, and obedience to the divine law is but another name for morality, or, what is the more divine form of it, holiness. And wherever this holiness exists, we may make sure that the holiness is not the *cause* of spiritual life and safety, but faith is still the wellspring of all. You saw, a few weeks ago, the hawthorn covered with a delicious luxuriance of snow-white flowers, loading the air with fragrance; now, no one among the admiring gazers supposed that those sweet May blossoms caused the hawthorn to live. After a while you noticed the horse chestnut adorned with its enchanting pyramids of flowers, but

none among you foolishly supposed that the horse chestnut was sustained and created by its bloom; you rightly conceived these forms of beauty to be the products of life, and not the cause of it. You have here, in nature's emblems, the true doctrine of the Inner life. Holiness is the *flower* of the new nature. It is inexpressibly lovely and infinitely desirable; no, it must be produced in its season, or we may justly doubt the genuineness of a man's profession; but the fair graces of holiness do not save, or give spiritual life, or maintain it—these are rills from the fount, and not the fountain itself. The most athletic man in the world does not live by being athletic, but is athletic because he lives, and has been trained to a perfection of animal vigor. The most enterprising merchant holds his personal property not on account of his character or merit, but because of his civil rights as a citizen. A man may cultivate his land up to the highest point of production, but his right to his land does not depend upon the mode of culture, but rather upon his title deeds. So the Christian should aim after the highest degree of spiritual culture and of heavenly perfection, and yet his salvation, as to its justness and security, depends not on his attainments, but rests upon his faith in a crucified Redeemer, as it is written in the text, "The just shall live by faith." faith is the fruitful root, the inward channel of sap, the great life-grace in every branch of the vine. In considering the text, this morning, we shall use it, perhaps somewhat apart from the context in which it stands, and yet not apart from the mind of the Spirit, nor apart from the intention of the apostle, if not here yet in other places.

I. In the first place, **IN THE PUREST SPIRITUAL SENSE IT IS TRUE THAT THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH**.

It is through faith that a man becomes just, for otherwise, before the law of God he is convicted of being unjust—being justified by faith he is enrolled among the just ones. It is

through faith that he is at first quickened and breathes the air of heaven, for naturally he was dead in trespasses and sins. Faith is the first sure sign of the spiritual life within the human breast. He repents of sin and looks to Jesus, because he believes the testimony of God's Son; and he believes that testimony because he has received a new life. He depends upon the atoning blood of Jesus because his heart has received the power to do so by the Holy Spirit's gift of spiritual life. Ever afterwards you shall judge of the vigor of the man's Inner life by the state of his faith—if his faith grows exceedingly, then his life also, is increasing in power. If his faith diminishes, then depend upon it, the vital spark burns low; let faith ebb out, and the life-floods are ebbing too; let faith roll in with a mighty sweep, in a floodtide of full assurance, then the secret life-floods within the man are rising, and filling the man with sacred energy. Were it possible for faith to die, the spirit-life must die too; and it is very much because faith is imperishable that the new life is incorruptible. You shall find men only *live* before God as they believe in God and rest in the merit of His dear Son; and in proportion as they do this you shall find they live in closer fellowship with heaven. Great saints must be great believers—Little-Faith never can be a matured saint.

Observe that this truth of God proves itself in all the characteristics of spiritual life. The *nobility* of the inner life—who has not noticed it? A man whose life is hid with Christ in God is one of the aristocrats of this world; he who knows nothing of the Inner life is but little above a mere animal, and is by no means comparable to the sons of God—to whom is given the royal priesthood, the saintly inheritance. In proportion as the spiritual life is developed, the man grows in dignity, becoming more like the Prince of Glory, yet the very root and source of the dignity of the holy life lies in faith. Take an instance. The life of Abraham is remarkable for its placid

nobility. The man appears at no time to be disturbed. Surrounded by robber bands, he dwells in his tent as quietly as in a walled city. Abraham walked with God, and does not seem to have quickened or slackened his pace; he maintained a serene, obedient walk, never hastening through fear, nor loitering through sloth; he kept sweet company with his God—and what a noble life was his! The father of the faithful was second to no character in history; he was a kingly man, yes, a conqueror of kings, and greater than they. How calm is his usual life! Lot, following his carnal prudence, is robbed in Sodom, and at last loses all—Abraham following his faith, abides as a pilgrim, and is safe. Lot is carried away captive out of a city, but Abraham remains securely in a tent, because he cast himself on God. When does Abraham fail? When does that mighty eagle suddenly drop as with wounded wing? It is when the arrow of unbelief has pierced him—he begins to tremble for Sarah, his wife; she is fair, perhaps the Philistine king will take her from him. Then, in an unbelieving moment, he says, "She is my sister." Ah, Abraham, where is your nobility now? The man who so calmly and confidently walked with God while he believed, degrades himself to utter the thing that is not, and so falls to the common level of falsehood! Even so will you, so shall each of us, strong or weak, noble or fallen, according to our faith. Walking confidently with God, and leaning upon the everlasting arm, you shall be as a celestial prince surrounded by ministering spirits; your life shall be happy and holy, and glorious before the Lord; but the moment you distrust your God, you will be tempted to follow degrading methods of evil policy, and you will pierce yourself through with many sorrows.

As the dignity, so the *energy* of the spiritual life depends upon faith. Spiritual life, when sound, is exceedingly energetic; it can do all things. Take the apostles, as an instance, and see how over sea and land, under persecutions and sufferings, they

nevertheless pressed forward in the Holy War, and declared Christ throughout all nations. Wherever the spiritual life fairly pervades man, it is a force which cannot be bound, fettered, or kept under; it is a holy fury, a sacred fire in the bones. Rules, and customs, and proprieties, it snaps as fire snaps bonds of tinder; but its energy depends upon God the Holy Spirit—entirely upon the existence and power of faith. Let a man be troubled with doubts as to the religion which he has espoused, or concerning his own interest in the privileges which that religion bestows, and you will soon find that all the energy of his spiritual life is gone—he will have little more than a name to live, practically he will be powerless. Take Abraham again. Abraham finds that certain kings from the East have pounced upon the cities of the plain. He cares very little for Sodom or Gomorrah, but among the prisoners his nephew, Lot, has been carried away. Now, he has a great affection for his kinsman, and resolves to do his duty and rescue him. Without stopping to inquire whether his little band was sufficient, he relies entirely upon the Lord his God, and with his servants and neighbors hastens after the spoilers, nothing doubting, but expecting aid from the Most High God. That day did Jehovah, who raised up the righteous man from the East, give his enemies to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow, and the patriarch returned from the slaughter of the kings laden with the spoil. He could not but fight while he believed. It was impossible for him to sit still and yet believe in God; but if he had not believed, then had he said, "The matter must go by default; it is a sorrowful misfortune, but my nephew, Lot, must bear it; perhaps God's providence will interpose for him." faith believes in providence, but she is full of activity, and her activity, excited by reliance upon providence leads like wheel within a wheel to the fulfillment of the providential decree. My brothers and sisters, it is necessary for us to believe much in God, or we

shall do but little for Him. Believe that God is with you, and you will have an insatiable ambition to extend the Savior's kingdom; believe in the power of the truth of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit who goes with the truth, and you will not be content with the paltry schemes of modern Christendom, you will glow and burn with a seraph's ardor, longing and desiring even to do more than you can do, and practically carrying out with your utmost ability what your heart desires for the glory of the Lord.

Further, it is quite certain that all *the joy* of the spiritual life depends upon faith. You all know that the moment your faith ceases to hang simply upon Jesus, or even if it allows a little check, your joy evaporates. Joy is a welcome angel, but it will not tarry where faith does not entertain it; spiritual joy is a bird of paradise which will build its nest only among the branches of faith; faith must pipe, or joy will not dance. Unbelieving Jacob finds his days few and evil, but believing Abraham dies an old man, and full of years; if you would anoint your head and wash your face—and put away the ashes and the sackcloth, you must trust more firmly in the faithfulness of the Lord your God! Doubts and fears never could strike so much as a spark with which to light the smallest candle to cheer a Christian, but simple trust in Jesus makes the sun to rise in his strength with healing beneath his wings—even upon those that sit in the valley of the shadow of death. In proportion as you lean on Christ—in *that* proportion shall life's burden grow light, heaven's joys grow real, and your whole being more elevated.

I might thus continue to mention each point in the secret life, but I rather choose to proceed in order to observe only that all our *growth* in the spiritual life depends upon our faith. True life must grow in its season. You can tell the difference between two stakes which are driven into the ground—the one may happen to have life in it, and if so, before long it sprouts,

while the dead one is unchanged. And so with the Christian; if he is living he will grow. He must make advances. It is not possible for the Christian to sit still and remain in the same state month after month; but if he is to increase in spiritual riches, he must of necessity exert a constant and increasing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter cannot walk the waters except he believes; doubting does not help him, but it sinks him. I fear that some of my brothers and sisters try to grow in spiritual life by adopting methods which are not of faith. Some think that they will set themselves rules of self-denial or extra devotion—these plans are lawful, but they are not in themselves effective, for vows may be observed mechanically, and rules obeyed formally, and yet the heart may be drifting away yet further from the Lord. Yes, these vows and rules may be a means of deluding us into the vain belief that all is well, whereas we are nearing spiritual shipwreck! I have found in my own spiritual life that the more rules I lay down for myself, the more sins I commit. The habit of regular morning and evening prayer is one which is indispensable to a believer's life, but the prescribing of the length of prayer, and the compelled remembrance of so many persons and subjects, may gender unto bondage, and *strangle* prayer rather than assist it. To say I will humble myself at such a time, and rejoice at such another season is nearly as much an affectation as when the preacher wrote in the margin of his sermon, "cry here," "smile here." Why, if the man preached his sermon rightly, he would be sure to cry in the right place, and to smile at a suitable moment; and when the spiritual life is sound, it produces prayer at the right time, and humiliation of soul and sacred joy spring forth spontaneously, apart from rules and vows. The kind of religion which makes itself to order by the almanac, and turns out its emotions like bricks from a machine, weeping on Good Friday, and rejoicing two days afterwards, measuring its motions by the

moon, is too artificial to be worthy of your imitation. The liberty of the spiritual life is a grand thing, and where that liberty is maintained constantly, and the energy is kept up, you will need much faith, for the fading of faith will be the withering of devotion, liberty will degenerate into license, and the energy of your life will drivel into confidence in yourself. Let who will, bind himself with rules and regulations in order to (as he may think) advance himself in divine grace—be it ours, like Abraham, to believe God, and it shall be counted us for righteousness, and like Paul, to run the race which is set before us, looking unto Jesus! Faith enriches the soil of the heart; faith fills our treasuries with the choicest gold, and loads our tables with the daintiest food for our souls. By faith we shall do valiantly, stopping lions' mouths, and quenching violent flames; but faith in Jesus, the Savior, faith in the heavenly Father, faith in the Holy Spirit, this we must have, or we perish like foam upon the waters.

As the other side of all this, let me notice that some Christians appear to try to live by *experience*. If they *feel* happy today, they say they are saved, but if they feel unhappy tomorrow, they conclude that they are lost; if they feel at one moment a deep and profound calm overspreading their spirits, then are they greatly elevated, but if the winds blow and the waves beat high, then they suppose that they are none of the Lord's people. Ah, miserable state of suspense! To live by feeling is a dying life; you know not *where* you are, nor *what* you are if your feelings are to be the barometer of your spiritual condition. Beloved, a simple faith in Christ will enable you to remain calm even when your feelings are the reverse of happy—to remain confident when your emotions are far from ecstatic. If indeed we are saved by Jesus Christ, then the foundation of our salvation does not lie within us, but in that crucified man who now reigns in glory. When *He* changes, ah,

then what changes must occur to us, but since He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, why need we be so soon removed from our steadfastness? Believe in Jesus, dear heart, when you cannot find a spark of divine grace within yourself; cast yourself as a sinner into the Savior's arms when you cannot think a good thought, nor uplift a good desire. When your soul feels like a barren wilderness that yields not so much as one green blade of hope, or joy, or love—still look up to the great Farmer who can turn the desert into a garden; have confident faith in Jesus at all times, for if you believe in Him, you are saved, and cannot be condemned. However good or bad your state, this shall not affect the question—you believe, therefore you shall be saved! Give up living from hand to mouth in that poor miserable way of frames and feelings, and wait only upon the Lord from whom comes your salvation.

Many professors are even worse; they try to live by experiments. I am afraid a great many among Dissenters are of that kind; they must have a revival meeting once a week at least; if they do not get a grand display quite so often, they begin to fall dreadfully back, and crave an exciting meeting as drunkards long for spirits. It is a poor spiritual life which hangs on eloquent sermons and such like stimulants; these may be good things and comforting things—be thankful for them, but I pray you, do not let your spiritual life *depend* upon them. It is very much as though a man should, according to Scriptural language, feed on the wind, and snuff up the east wind, for your faith is not to stand in the wisdom of *man*, nor in the excellence of human speech, nor in the earnestness of your fellow Christians, but in your simple faith in Him who is, and was, and is to come; who is the Savior of sinners! A genuine faith in Christ will enable you to live happily even if you are denied the means of divine grace; a genuine faith in Christ will make you rejoice on board ship, keep Sabbath on a sick bed, and make your dwelling

a temple, even if yours is but a log hut in the far West, or a shanty in the bush of Australia. Only have *faith*, and you need not look to these excitements any more than the mountains look to the summer's sun for their stability.

Shall I need further to say; by way of caution that I fear many professors live *anyway?* I know not how otherwise to describe it; they have not enough caution to look at their inward experience; they have not enough vigor to care about excitement, but they live a kind of listless, dreamy, comatose life. I mean some of *you!* You believe that you were saved years ago, you united yourselves to a Christian church and were baptized, and you conclude that all is right. You have written your conversion in your spiritual trade-books as a good asset—you consider it as a very clear thing. *I* am afraid it is rather *doubtful;* still *you* think it *sure*. Since that time you have kept up the habit of prayer, you have been honest, you have subscribed to church funds, have done your duty outwardly as a Christian, but there has been very little vitality in your godliness—it has been surface work, skin-deep consistency. You have not been grievously exercised about *sin!* You have not been bowed under the weight of inward corruption; neither have you been, on the other hand, exhilarated by a sense of divine love, and a delightful recognition of your interest in it; you have gone on dreamily, as I have heard of soldiers marching when they were asleep. O for a thunderbolt to wake you, for this is dangerous living! Of all modes of living, if you are a Christian, this is one of the most perilous! And if you are *not* a Christian, it is one of the most seductive, for while the outward sinner may be got at by the preaching of the gospel, you are almost beyond the reach of gospel ministry, because you will not admit that warnings are meant for you. You wrap yourselves up and say, "It is well with me," while you are really naked, and poor, and miserable in the sight of God. Oh, if you could but get back to live by faith!

II. Secondly, "the just shall live by faith"—this means that **FAITH IS OPERATIVE IN OUR DAILY LIFE**.

It is operative in many ways, but three observations will suffice. Faith is *the great sustaining energy* with the just man under all his trials, difficulties, sufferings, or labors. It is a notion with some that true religion is meant to be kept shut up in churches and chapels as a proper thing for Sundays, which ought to be attended to, since a man is not respectable if he does not take a pew *somewhere*, even if he does not need sit in it, or sitting in it, pays no more attention to the word preached than to a ballad singer in the street! There is a decent show of religion which people as a rule must keep up, or they cannot be received into polite society, but the idea of bringing religion down to the breakfast table, introducing it to the drawing-room, taking it into the kitchen, keeping it on hand in the shop, in the workshop, or the corn exchange, carrying it out to sea in your vessel—this is thought by some to be sheer fanaticism! And yet if there is anything taught by the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is just this, that religion is a matter of common, everyday life, and no man understands the Christian religion at all unless he has fully accepted it as not a thing for Sundays, and for certain places and certain times, but for *all* places, and *all* times, and *all* conditions, and *all* forms of life. An active, operative faith is by the Holy Spirit implanted in the Christian, and it is sent to him on purpose to sustain him under trial. I shall put this to some of you as a test by which you may try whether you have obtained the faith of God's elect. You have lost a large sum of money—well, are you distracted and bewildered? Do you almost lose your senses? Do you murmur against God? Then I ask you what are *you* better than the man who has no religion at all? Are you not an unbeliever? If you believed that all things work together for your good, would you be so rebellious? Yet that is God's own declaration; now is the

time when your faith in God should enable you to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." What do you more than others unless you can thus speak with submission and resignation, yes, even with cheerfulness? Where is your new nature if you cannot say, "It is the Lord, let Him do as seems good to Him"? By this shall you test whether you have faith or not. Or it may be you have lost a darling child, and that loss has cut you to the very quick; you are scarcely able to reconcile yourself at present to it; yet I trust you do not so repine as to accuse your God of cruelty, but I trust your faith helps you to say, "I shall go to him, though he shall not return to me. I would not have it other than my heavenly Father has determined." Here will be a crucible for your faith!

Those two instances may serve as specimens. In all positions of life, a real faith is to the believer like the hair of Samson in which his great strength lies. It is his Moses' rod dividing seas of difficulty, his Elijah's chariot in which he mounts above the earth. So, too, in difficult labors, for instance, in labors for Christ's cause, a man who feels it his duty to do good in his neighborhood, yet may say, "I do not know what I can do; I am afraid to commence so great a matter, for I feel so unfit, and so feeble." My dear friend, if it is your duty to do it, your not being able to do it cannot excuse you, because you have only to go and tell your heavenly Father of your weakness, and ask for strength, and He will give it liberally! Some of us who can now speak with ease were once very diffident in public; those preachers who are now most useful were poor stammerers before their gifts were developed, and those who are our best teachers, and most successful soul-winners, were not always so; but they had faith, and they pressed forward, and God helped them. Now, if your religion is not worth an old song, you will not persevere in holy work, but if it is real and

true, you will press forward through all difficulties, feeling it to be an essential of your very existence, that you should promote the Redeemer's cause! I would quite as soon not be, as live to be a useless thing; better far to fatten the fields with one's corpse, than to lie rotting above ground in idleness, for to be a soldier in Immanuel's ranks, and never fight, never carry a burden, nor uphold a banner, nor hurl a dart—yes, better that the dogs should eat my worthless carrion, than that such should be the case. Feeling this, then, you will press forward with the little power you have, and new power will come upon you; and so you will prove that your faith is sincere, because it comes to your support in the ordinary work of Christian life. Under all difficulties and labors then, the just shall live by faith.

Furthermore, faith in ordinary life *has an effect upon the dispensations of divine providence.* It is a riddle which we cannot explain how everything is eternally fixed by divine Purpose, and yet the prayer of faith moves the arm of God. Though the enigma cannot be explained, the fact is not to be denied. My brothers and sisters, I may be thought fanatical, but it is my firm belief that in ordinary matters, such as the obtaining of your living, the education of your children, the ruling of your household, you are to depend upon God as much as in the grand matter of the salvation of your soul! The hairs of your head are all numbered; go to God then about your trifles! Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father; cast upon the Lord your minor trials! Never think that anything is too little for your heavenly Father's love to think upon; He who rides upon the whirlwind, walks in the garden at evening in the cool breath of the zephyr; He who shakes the avalanche from its Alp, also makes the dry leaf to twinkle as it falls from the aspen; He whose eternal power directs the spheres in their everlasting marches, guides each grain of dust which is blown from the summer's threshing floor! Confide in Him for the *little*

as well as for the great, and you shall not find Him to fail you! Is He God of the hills only, and not the God of the valleys?

"Are we to we expect miracles then?" asks one. No, but we expect the same results as are compassed by miracles. I have sometimes thought that for God to interpose by a miracle to accomplish a purpose is a somewhat clumsy method, if I may be allowed such a word. But for Him to accomplish the very same thing without interfering with the wheels of His providence seems to me the more thoroughly God-like method. If I were hungry today, and God had promised to feed me, it would be as much a fulfillment of His promise if my friend here brought my food unexpectedly, as if the ravens brought it; and the bringing of it by ordinary means would all the better prove that God was there—not interrupting the machinery of providence, but making it to educe the end which He designed. God will not turn stones into bread for you, but perhaps He will give you stones to break, and you will thus *earn* your bread! God may not rain manna out of heaven, and yet every shower of rain falling upon your garden brings you bread. It will be the better for you to earn your food, than to have it brought by ravens, or better that Christian charity should make you its care than that an inexhaustible barrel and cruse should be placed in your cupboard. Anyhow, your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure. My witness is, and I speak it for the honor of God, that God is a good provider. I have been cast upon the providence of God ever since I left my father's house, and in all cases He has been my Shepherd, and I have known no lack. My first income as a Christian minister was small enough in all conscience, never exceeding 40 pounds, yet I was as rich then, as I am now, for I had enough. And I had no more cares, no, not half as many, then, as I have now! And when I breathed my prayer to God then, as I do now, for *all* things temporal and spiritual, I found Him ready to answer me at

every pinch—and pinches I have had full many! Many a monetary trial since then have I had in connection with the College work which depends for funds upon the Lord's moving His people to generosity. My faith has been often tried, but God has always been faithful and sent supplies in hours of need; if any should tell *me* that prayer to God was a mere piece of excitement, and that the idea of God's answering human cries is absurd, I would laugh the statement to scorn, for my experience is not that of one or two singular instances, but that of *hundreds* of cases in which the Lord's interposition for the necessities of *His* work has been as manifest as if He had rent the clouds, and thrust forth His own naked arm and bounteous hand to supply the needs of His servant! This, my testimony, is but the echo of the witness of the Lord's people everywhere! When they look back, they will tell you that God is good to Israel, and that when they have walked by faith they have never found that God has failed them. The Red Sea of trouble has been divided; the waters have stood upright as a heap, and the depths have been congealed in the heart of the sea. As for their doubts and their difficulties, like the Egyptians the depths have covered them, there has not been one of them left. And standing on the further shore to look back upon the past, the redeemed of the Lord have shouted aloud, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," for faith has conquered all their difficulties, and brought supplies for all their needs.

Do not let me be misunderstood, however; faith is never to be regarded as a *premium* for idleness. If I sit down and fold my arms, and say, "The Lord will provide," He will most likely provide me a summons to the County Court, and a place in the parish workhouse! God has *never* given any promise to idle people that He will provide for them, and therefore they have no right to believe that He will! To trust in God to make up for our laziness is not *faith*, but wicked *presumption!* Neither does the

power of faith afford ground for fanaticism; I have no right to say, "I should like to have so-and-so, and I will ask for it, and shall have it." God has never promised to give to us everything which our whimsies may select. If we really want any good thing, we may plead the promise, "No good thing will I uphold from them who walk uprightly," but we must never dream that God will pander to our fooleries. The God of wisdom will not be part and parcel with our mere whims! Nor is faith to be a substitute for prudence and economy. I have known some who have to a great degree abstained from energetic action because they feared to interfere with the Lord; this fear never perplexes me; my faith never leads me to believe that *God* will do for me what *I can do for myself!* I do *not* believe that the Lord works needlessly. Up to the highest pitch that my own prudence, and strength, and judgment can carry me, I am to go depending upon divine guidance. Then I stop, for I can go no further, and I plead with my Father thus—"Now, Lord, the promise reaches further than this; it is Your business to make up the deficiency." There I pause, and God is as good as His word, but if I stop short when *I* might advance—how dare I ask the Lord to pander to my sloth? I believe, in Christian work, we ought for God to exert ourselves to the utmost, both in the giving of our substance, and in the collecting help from our fellow Christians—and come in faith and prayer to the Lord for help. Faith is operative in the land of the unseen, not in the seen; faith is to come to your help where creature-power fails you; up to the point at which you *can* work, you *must* work, and with God's blessing upon it, your work will not hinder your faith, but be an exhibition and display of it.

Thus with a simple faith in God, not fanatical, not idle, but going on in the path of prudence, desiring to glorify God—you shall find that all difficulties will vanish, and your doubts and fears shall fly away. Do understand that even faith itself will be

no guarantee against trials and against poverty, for it is good for God's people to be tried, and there are some of them who would not glorify God if they were not poor; therefore you are not to suppose that you have no faith because you are in need—neither are you to *expect* that in answer to prayer God will necessarily keep you in easy circumstances. If it is best for you that you should not be poor, He will keep you from it, but if it is better that you should be, He will keep you in it. Resignation should walk hand-in-hand with faith, and they each will minister to the other's beauty.

III. Lastly, **THIS IS ALSO TRUE IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AS A WHOLE.**

The Christian church lives by faith. She lives by faith in opposition to *speculation*. Every now and then a fit of speculative philosophy seizes the church, and then her vitality withers. In the days of the school-men, just before Luther's time, good men were fighting and squabbling from morning to night; gathered like so many carrion crows around the dead body of Aristotle; fighting about nobody knows what! It is said that they held sage discussions upon how many angels could poise themselves upon the point of a needle! While such foolish and unlearned questions as these were being raised, the poor people in the Christian church were starved, and the church lost all its energy; sinners were not converted, fundamental truths of God were despised; but then came Luther, and the notable revival. In more modern days, in the period after Doddridge and Watts, among Dissenters the habit of philosophizing upon the Trinity was common. Brothers tried to be very exact and precise, as exact and precise as the Athanasian Creed, while others combated their dogmatism, and the result was that a large proportion of the Dissenting churches fell asleep—degenerated doctrinally, and Socinianism threatened to eat out the very life of evangelical Dissent. Speculation is not the life

of the Christian church, but *faith*, a reception of the Bible truth in its sublimity and authority, an obedient belief in revelation, not because we understand all its teachings, but because not understanding, we nevertheless receive the Lord's word upon the *ipse dixit* of the Most High. Whenever the church is simple-minded enough to require no outworks to her faith, to care very little about evidences, *internal* or *external,* but just to fight the battle on the ground of divine authority saying, "This is of God, and at your peril reject it"—she has been "fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." Let her begin to split hairs, try to move away objections, and spend all her time upon her outworks, and then her glory departs.

In the next place, faith is the life of the church in opposition to *reliving despondency*. In our own churches it used to be the habit for our friends to be very well content if they built a chapel in the lowest part of a town, down two courts, three alleys, and a turning. And as to attendants, the members appeared to be particularly anxious to avoid anything like the excitement of a crowd; they were a most retiring people as a rule, but as to coming out into the forefront to set their city on a hill, and make their light shine by evangelizing the masses, that was a forgotten business! At the present hour, from other quarters you constantly hear expressions defiled with the most dastardly timidity, denoting the most shameful cowardice; for instance, lately we have heard that, "The church is in danger." "The church is in danger." Christians with their Bibles, and all the truths in the Bibles, Christians with their ministers, and all their earnestness, Christians with the Holy Spirit, with God's promises, with the foundations against which the gates of hell shall not prevail—and yet in *danger!* Really, such remarks and such fears are quite unworthy of the manhood of those who believe in the divinity of the Christian faith! No church can make progress till she believes enough in her God to be sure

that in Him she is strong; while she *imagines* that she is weak, she *is* weak! Fear paralyzes her; dread kills her energies, but when she believes in the divine Strength with which she is encountered as with a golden belt, then she marches on with certainty of triumph. May we as a church always believe that as long as we are resting upon the strength of God, nothing can hurt us. I defy the House of Lords, the House of Commons, the Pope, the Turk, and all the nations in the entire world, and all the devils in hell to put this church in danger! I do not know anything that they could take away from us, for I know of nothing which they have given us! If *they* had endowed and established us, they could take away what they gave, but as they have not given us a thread for a shoelace, they can do whatever they please, and we shall not even call a church meeting to consider it. Yet here are other churches, with Lord Bishops, and deans, and stipends, and I know not what beside, which are horribly shaken because an arm of flesh is failing them. The pay of their preachers will by-and-by, by a gradual process, be withdrawn, and they tremble for the ark of the Lord! Shame on your little minds, to be thus afraid; surely you have lost confidence in the truth of God, and in God, or you would not fear because of the talents of gold which will be justly withheld from you! Remember that the truth of God allied with *earthly* power has often been defeated by error—but the truth of God alone has always *defeated* error, even when that error has had physical might upon its side. Let truth have her fair chance, and stand alone; she is most strong when least hampered with human strength, and most sure to be victorious when she has no might but that which dwells in herself or comes from her God!

In the next place, the Christian church lives by faith, that is, faith in opposition to a *squeamishness* which I see springing up nowadays as to the selection of instruments. Let me be

understood. I hear it is said, "Why allow these men to preach in the street? Is it not a pity that illiterate persons should preach at all? Some of them are very ungrammatical, and really, what they say at the very best is very so-so; is it not better that none should go out but the best trained men?" Then, for missions, it is said only the very best picked men should be sent forth; as to young men, full of zeal, not having had experience, and not having learned all the classics, and being well up in mathematics—it is of no use thinking to send them! Many a church indeed thinks that all her officers ought to be rich, all her ministers learned, all her agents Masters of Arts, at least—if not Doctors of Divinity. This was not so in olden times; thus it was not when the church of God grew mightily, for of old the church of God had FAITH—in what? Why, faith in *weakness!* Faith in the things that *were not!* Did not she believe, "Not many noble, not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty are called; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised"? It is very memorable that in the catacombs of Rome, among those remarkable inscriptions which are now preserved with so much care as the memorials of the departed saints, that it is rare to find an inscription which is all of it spelt correctly; proving that the persons who wrote them, who were no doubt the very pick of the Christian flock, could neither write nor spell correctly, and yet *these* were the men and women who turned the world upside down! When Wesley began his career, our churches were nearly dead with the disease called, "proprieties," but Mr. Wesley employed men, some of whom were quite unlettered, to go about to preach; and by those men this *nation* was revived! To this day our Primitive Methodist friends are doing a great and noble work for which God be thanked,

because they use almost every man they have, and they use the men till they become fit to be used, trained and tutored by *practice*. In this church I thank God I have always encouraged every brother and sister to do all they can, and I do still urge all so to do! I trust there is not a young man here who can say that I ever held him back in desiring to serve his Master; if I have, I am sure I am very sorry for it. Oh, all of you do all that you can, for this church, at any rate, has faith in you all, that though you make a thousand blunders, yet it is better to have the gospel preached blunderingly than not at all! And while three millions and more in London are perishing for lack of knowledge, it is better that you spoil the Queen's English, and make ever such mistakes than that you should not preach Jesus Christ! God will not be angry with you for all your ignorance, if you are not ignorant of the one thing necessary.

So, beloved, it comes to this—that we must not, as a Christian church, calculate our resources, nor take out our note books and count up how much we have to rely upon; the treasury of the church is the generosity of God; the power of the church is the omnipotence of Jehovah; the persuasions of the church are the irresistible influences of the Holy Spirit; the destiny of the church is an ultimate conquest over all the sons of men! Advance then, every one of you to the fray, for you advance also to conquest! Rely upon Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," and you shall find that as the just, you *shall* live by faith! If you sit down and waste your time, or turn your backs and retire from the battle, you shall be written among the cowards whose memorial is in the dust; but if you stand fast, and are immovable, "always abounding in the work of the Lord," your record shall be on high, and your portion shall be at the right hand of the Father, where Christ sits, and where you shall also sit forever and ever! God bless these words for His name's sake. Amen.

815 DANIEL'S UNDAUNTED COURAGE – DAN. 6:10

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Morning, June 14th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did before." — Daniel 6:10

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Daniel 6; Matthew 10:16-33]

DANIEL HAD BEEN exalted to very great worldly prosperity, but his soul had prospered too. Oftentimes outward advancement means inward decline. Tens of thousands have been intoxicated by success. Though they bade fair in starting in the race of life to win the prize, they were tempted to turn aside to gather the golden apples, and so they missed the crown. It was not so with Daniel—he was as perfect before God in his high estate as in his lowlier days; and this is to be accounted for by the fact that he sustained the energy of his outward profession by constant secret communion with God. He was, we are told, a man of an excellent spirit, and a man abundant in prayer; his head was not turned by his elevation, and the Lord fulfilled in him His promise to "make His servant's feet like

hinds' feet, that they may stand upon their high places." Yet, although Daniel preserved his integrity, he did not find a position of greatness to be one of rest. As the birds peck at the ripest fruit, so his envious enemies assailed him, and as the most conspicuous warriors most attract the arrows of the foe, so the honors of Daniel brought upon him the enmities of many. Seek not then, beloved, seek not then, with an excess of desire, or unrest of ambition, to be great among the great ones of the earth. There are more precious things than honor and wealth. A Persian king, wishing to give two of his courtiers a token of his regard, gave to one of them a golden cup, and to the other a kiss: he who had obtained the golden cup considered that he was hardly done by, and envied the courtier who received the kiss from the monarch's own mouth. And let me say, let who will receive the wealth and honors of the world which make up her golden cup, if you receive a kiss of favor from the lips of God, and feel the sweetness of it in your inmost soul, you have received more than they; you have no reason whatever to repine though that kiss should come to you in poverty and sickness, but rather to rejoice that God has counted you worthy, in His infinite grace, to receive the more of spirituals though you have the less of temporals! Luther declared that all the greatness of the world was but a bone which God threw to a dog, "For," he said, "He gives more to the Pope and to the Turk than to all His saints put together," and so verily it is. To be great, distinguished, and wealthy, may be the lot of a Haman who shall be hanged upon a gallows, while God's true servant may sit at the gate and bear contempt as did Mordecai. Better to pine with Lazarus than feast with Dives, for the love of God more than compensates for temporary disadvantages. Better an ounce of divine grace than a ton of worldly goods. Though the good things come not as the left-handed blessings of outward prosperity, be you more

than content if you win the right-handed benediction of spiritual joy.

I present to you the example of Daniel for your observation today, believing that these are times when we need to be as firm and resolute as he, and that at any rate, occasions will come to every one of us before we win our crown, when we shall need to put our foot down firmly, and be steadfast and unflinching for the Lord and His truth.

I. First, let me invite your attention to **DANIEL'S HABITUAL DEVOTION**—it is worthy of our study. We might never have known of it if he had not been so sorely tried, but fire reveals the hidden gold.

Daniel's habitual devotion. We are told before the trial he had been in the constant habit of prayer. *He prayed much.* There are some forms of spiritual life which are not absolutely essential, but prayer is of the very essence of spirituality. He that has no prayer lacks the very breath of the life of God in the soul; I will not say that every man who prays is a Christian, but I *will* say that every man who prays sincerely is so. Remember, men may pray after a fashion, and even practice private prayer, and yet may be deceiving themselves. As the frogs of Egypt came up into the bedchambers, so does hypocrisy intrude itself even into the private places where men pretend to worship God, but I do say that a cheerful constancy in sincere private devotion is such a mark of divine grace, that he who has it may fairly conclude himself to be one of the Lord's family.

Daniel always had subjects for prayer and reasons for prayer. He prayed for himself that in his eminent position he might not be uplifted with pride, might not be taken in the snares of those who envied him, might not be permitted to fall into the usual oppressions and dishonesties of Eastern rulers. He prayed for his people; he saw many of the house of Judah who were not in such prosperous circumstances as himself; he

remembered those who were in bonds, as being bound with them; those who were bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, he brought in the arms of faith before his God. He interceded for Jerusalem; it grieved him that the city was laid waste—that still the brand of the Chaldean destroyer was upon Mount Zion, so beautiful, and once the joy of the whole earth. He pleaded for the return from the captivity which he knew was ordained of his God; he prayed for the glory of His God, that the day might come when the idols should be utterly abolished, and when the whole earth would know that Jehovah rules in heaven, and among the sons of men. It would have been a delightful thing to have listened at the keyhole of Daniel's closet, and to have heard the mighty intercessions which went up to the Lord God of Hosts!

We read next, that with all his prayers he mingled *thanksgiving*. Do observe it, for so many forget this, "He prayed and gave thanks to God." Surely, it is poor devotion which is always asking, and never returning its gratitude; am I to live upon the bounty of God, and never to thank Him for what I receive? Surely prayers in which there is no thanksgiving are selfish things: they rob God; and will a man rob God—rob God even in his prayers—and yet expect that his prayers should be successful? Have I not often said in this place that prayer and praise resemble the process by which we live? We breathe in the atmospheric air, and then breathe it out again—prayer takes in deep drafts of the love and grace of God, and then praise breathes it out again—

"Prayer and praise, with sins forgiven,
Bring down to earth the bliss of heaven."

Good Daniel had learned to praise as well as to pray, and to offer to God that sweet incense which was made of diverse

spices, of earnest desires and longings mingled with thanksgivings and adorations.

It is worthy of notice that the text says, "Daniel prayed and gave thanks *before his God."* This enters into the very soul of prayer—this getting before God. O brothers and sisters, do you not often catch yourselves praying to the wind, and in private uttering words as though you were only to be heard by the four walls which bound your little room? But prayer, when it is right, comes before God in realizing the majesty of the throne of His grace, and seeing the blood of the eternal covenant sprinkled on it! Right prayer is discerning that God is gazing right through you, reading every thought and interpreting every desire; it is feeling that you yourself, are speaking into the ear of God, and are now, as it were—

"Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
And lost in His immensity."

This is praying, when we draw near to God! I shall not care if you do not use a single word, if you feel the majesty of God to be so overwhelming that words are out of place—and silence becomes far more expressive when you bow with sobs, and tears, and groans that cannot be uttered! That is the prayer which wins its suit of God, and is dear to the majesty of heaven! Thus Daniel prayed and gave thanks— not before men to *be seen* of them, nor yet in private before himself to satisfy his conscience, but "before God"—of whom he had an audience thrice each day.

That little word *"his"* I must not let slip, however. He prayed and gave thanks before *his* God. He spoke not to God merely as God who might belong to any man and every man, but unto *his* God whom he had espoused by a solemn determination that he would not turn aside from His service,

that determination having resulted from God's having determined to select him, and to make him His own man, peculiarly set apart unto His own praise. *"His God."* Why, it seems to me to bring up that word "covenant"— his "covenant God"—as though he had entered into covenant with God according to the language of the Most High, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." True son of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, was this Daniel when he looked upon God as being his own, his property, could claim Him, could say, as we sometimes sing in that sweet psalm, "Yes, my own God is He." Oh, to feel that the Lord belongs wholly to me! *My* God, *my* God—as if no other man can claim Him! My Father, my Shepherd, my friend, my Lord, and my God! Yes, here lies power in prayer—when a man can talk with God as his covenant God. That man cannot miss. Every arrow sticks in the center of the target when he pleads "before his God." That man will conquer the angel at Jabbok's brook who grips Him with both hands by a faith which knows its heaven-worked claims. It is not winning mercies from another's God, nor pleading outside the covenant, but the believer feels that he is asking of his own God mercies already promised and made sure to him by oaths, and covenant, and blood.

Some other particulars in the text are not quite as important; nevertheless, observe that he prayed *three times a day*. That does not tell you how often he prayed, but how often he was in the *posture* of prayer. Doubtless he prayed 300 times a day if necessary—his heart was always having commerce with the skies, but thrice a day he *formally* prayed. It has been well said that we usually take three meals in the day, and that it is well to give the soul as many meals as the body; we need the morning's guidance; we need the eventide's forgiveness; do we not also require the noontide's refreshment? Might we not well say at noontide, "Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where

You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon." If you find from morn till eve too long an interval between prayer, put in another golden link at midday! There is no rule in Scripture as to how often you should pray, and there is no rule as to *when* you should pray; it is left to the man's own gracious spirit to suggest a season. We need not come back to the bondage of the Mosaic covenant—to be under rule and rubric; we are left to that free Spirit who leads His saints aright. Yet, three times a day is a commendable number.

Notice, also, the *posture*. That, also, is of little consequence since we read in Scripture of men who prayed on the bed, with their face to the wall. We read of David *sitting* before the Lord. How very common and acceptable a posture was that of *standing* before God in prayer. Yet there is a peculiar appropriateness, especially in private prayer, in the posture of *kneeling;* it seems to say, "I cannot stand upright before Your majesty; I am a beggar, and I put myself in the position of a beggar; I ask of You, great God, on bended knee, in the posture of one who admits that he deserves nothing, but humbles himself before Your gracious majesty." The reason why he kneeled on the particular occasion mentioned in the text was no doubt, because he always *had* kneeled, and therefore always *would* kneel—he would not be driven from the posture, little as that might be, at a tyrant's word. No, if all earth and hell should be against him, if he had found it more to God's honor to kneel, then kneel he would, even though he should be cast into the lions' den for it.

One more observation: We are told that Daniel kneeled upon his knees *with his window open towards Jerusalem*. This was not done with any view to publicity. It may be that nobody could see him, even when his window was open, except the servants in the court; I suppose the house to have been erected as most Eastern houses were, with an open square in the center,

and though he would be looking towards Jerusalem, the windows would be looking into the court where he could only be observed by those who might be residents in the house, or visitors on business. Probably his fellow counselors knew the hour which he usually set apart for devotion, and therefore called in so as to find him in the act. Besides, you must remember that though it would be strange, here, for a man to pray with his windows open where he could be heard, it was not at all strange among the Orientals. You will find the Pharisees and others not at all slow to perform their devotions in any place when the hour of prayer comes, and therefore it would not be regarded at all as being of a Pharisaic nature that he should pray with his window open.

The window being open towards Jerusalem may have been suggested by the prayer of Solomon, when he asked that if the Lord's people were banished at any time, when they sought the Lord with their faces towards that holy place, God would hear them. It may have helped him also to remember that dear city towards which every Jew's heart turns with affection, even as the needle trembles towards its pole. The thought of its ruin assisted his earnestness, the recollection of its sin humbled him, and the Promises concerning it comforted him. He turned towards Jerusalem; and what does this say to us? Brothers and sisters, it tells us that we ought to take care when we pray, to have our window open towards Calvary! Neither turn you to the east, nor to the west, but let your spirits turn towards the cross of Christ; that is the great point towards which all the faces of the faithful must continually be turned—where Jesus died, where Jesus rose, where Jesus intercedes before the throne of mercy. There it is that the eyes of faith must look; always pray with your windows open towards Calvary; look upon the precious blood; gaze steadfastly upon the risen Lord; behold the authority of His plea, as before His Father He wins

His suit for His people, and you will grow strong to wrestle until you prevail. Thus I have brought before you Daniel's habitual devotion. Imitate it in all points essential; and where you cannot follow its letter, receive its spirit.

II. We must now turn to a second consideration, **DANIELS' ACTION UNDER TRIAL**.

There is nothing that kings and queens are much fonder of than meddling with religion. Though the Prussian king tried to make a number of watches all tick together, and could not do it, yet notwithstanding the experiment and its failure, there are always evil counselors who would force men's consciences to keep stroke. Folly is in the throne when monarchs patronize or oppress religion. Caesar always muddles when he meddles with the things of God. In Daniel's day there was an act of uniformity passed in some respects similar to the famous act which was thrust upon this land. Darius ordained that no man should pray for 30 days; the other act of uniformity commanded that no man should pray at any time in public without his book. There is not very much to prefer between the two. When this act of uniformity was passed, several courses were open to Daniel. He might, for instance, have said, "This does not answer my purpose. I have a high position in society. I am chief president over all these dominions, and though I am willing to suffer something for my religion, yet gold may be bought too dear, and therefore I shall cease to pray." He might have found many precedents and many companions. What crowds, when it has come to a question between life and truth, between honor and Christ, have made the evil choice, and perished infamously? Daniel does not seem to have raised that question. Yet he might have said, "Well, well, we must be prudent; God must be worshiped, certainly, but there is no particular reason for my worshiping Him in the usual room, nor even in the city where I live; I can retire in the

evening or find some more secret spot in my own house, and especially there is no occasion to open the window. I can pray with the window shut, and I shall be just as acceptable before God. I think, therefore, I shall keep my conscience clear, but not thrust out my religion in these evil days." Daniel did not so reason. He was a lion-like man, and scorned to lower his standard in the presence of the foe—for see, in his position, if he had not prayed as before, it would have been a scandal to the weak, and a scorn to the wicked. The weak would have said, "See, Daniel is cowed by the decree." Then every poor Jew throughout the realm would have found an excuse for forsaking his principles; and the wicked would have said, "Note, he serves his God when all goes well, but see where he drifts when trouble comes!" Daniel would not seek the secrecy which prudence might have suggested. Still, it might have suggested to him that he could pray *inwardly*. Prayers without words are just as acceptable to God: could he not do this? He felt he could not, inasmuch as the decree was not inward, and the king's opposition to religion was not inward. He did not believe in opposing outward falsehood by an inward truth. He did, in the language of the hymn we were singing, "strength to strength oppose." He would give distinct outward avowal of his own convictions in opposition to the outward persecuting edict.

Really consciences are in these day so difficult to understand, and are manufactured upon such intricate principles, that one can hardly form a judgment about them, but as Daniel did not happen to have one of those rotating, double-acting consciences, he did not try to import a new meaning into the terms of the decree, or invent a compromise between it and his own convictions—he went straightforward in the plain path. He knew what the edict meant, and therefore down on his knees he went before his God in direct defiance of it! Whether the edict might be read in a milder sense or not,

did not trouble Daniel; he knew what Darius meant by it, and what the captains and the counselors meant by it—and he knew, also, what he himself intended to do, and therefore he did the right thing, and before his God he dared the lions, rather than soil his conscience with anything of evil. Observe with care what Daniel did. He made up his mind to act as he had done *before*. Note how *quietly* he acted. He did not say to any of his enemies, "I mean to carry out my convictions." Not at all! He knew that talk was lost upon them, so he resorted to actions instead of words. He quietly went home when he found the law was passed—though grieved that such a thing was done, and without a single word of repining or caviling, he sought his chamber. I do not find that he was at all distracted or disturbed. The words, "As he had done before," seem to imply that he went upstairs as calmly as he had been accustomed to do; his servants would not have known, from his behavior, that any law had been made. He always had gone at that hour to pray, and they could hear him pray just as earnestly as he ever had done. He was focused on God, and therefore continued at perfect peace.

Note again how he acted unhesitatingly—*immediately!* He did not pause; he did not ask for time to consider what he should do. In matters of perilous duty, our first thoughts are best. When there is anything to be lost by religion, follow out the first thought of conscience, namely, "Do the right!" Who needs to question where duty points the way? Where God commands, there is no room for reason to raise doubts; yet I have no doubt if the devil could have whispered into the prophet's ear, he would have said, "Now, Daniel, you had better consider a little while; you are in a position where you can materially help your friends; you are of very great authority in this court—you may be of assistance to the true religion, and you do not know how many may be converted by your example!

You ought not lightly to give up a position where you can do so much good." That argument I have heard hundreds of times when people have been urged to come out of false positions, and do the right, but what have you and I to do with maintaining *our* influence and position at the expense of the truth of God? It is *never* right to do a little wrong to obtain the greatest possible good. Your duty is to do the right: consequences are with God, and, after all, it never can be, in the long run, a good thing either for you or for others to do wrong.

You will observe, also, that Daniel did not act under excitement, but *with a full knowledge of the result.* The record expressly has it—"When Daniel knew that the writing was signed." Many people will do right in a hurry, and under strong excitement will go further than they would have done in cold blood. But Daniel, probably shut out from the council by some crafty device of the counselors, no sooner heard that the statute stood good than, without parley, his resolution was formed and his mind made up. It was not for him to delay and to hesitate; he had all the data before him, and obedience made her determination known. Count the cost, young man, before you profess to be a Christian; do not espouse, upon a sudden, an enterprise for which you will be unequal. Devote yourselves to the Lord your God by His grace, but let it be according to the command of Christ, after having first made an estimate of that which will be required of you, and seek grace from on high that you may accomplish what otherwise will be impossible.

I like those words, and must go back to them again, *"as he had done before."* Here he makes no alteration; he takes not the slightest possible notice of the king's decree. At the same place, at the same hour, in the same posture, and in the same spirit, the prophet is found; this indicates to us the Christian's duty under persecution—he should act under persecution as he

would have done if none had arisen! If you have worshiped God under the smile of your Christian friends, worship Him under the crown of the ungodly; if you have, as a tradesman, pursued a course of honest action in more prosperous times, do not, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, tamper with that honest course because the times have changed. What has been right is right, and therefore abide by it! What you have done sincerely, still do, and God will give you a blessing in it. Daniel could not have performed that act of praying, when the lions' den was to be the penalty, if he had not fallen into the habit of constant prayer beforehand. It was his secret communion with God which gave him strength and vigor to push on. Because he was right, he found it easier to *stay* right whatever the penalty might be. I dare say I address some young man who has come from the country from a godly family where true religion has been daily set before him, and now he is placed in a workshop where he is startled to find that Jesus is ridiculed, and religion is a by-word. Now, friend, so as you used to do at home; make no difference to please vain men; take care that you begin as you mean to go on. I would not say merely, "Do not give up the spirit of religion," but, "Do not even yield the form." The devil never gives up on us—do not quit fighting him! He takes care to fight us with all his might; let us do the same to him. I believe hundreds of Christian men make a hard lot for themselves by little yielding at first, for generally is it so in this world, that if a man is determined and makes up his mind, after a while the world will leave him alone. In the barracks when the soldier kneels to pray, how often has he been the subject of a thousand ribald jests, and so has *given up* all thought of bowing the knee! Yet we have heard of a real convert, who, when he came into the regiment, having been converted, knelt down to pray, and as he persisted in so doing, his comrades said, "Ah, he's one of the plucky ones; he's a genuine fellow"; and they

left him alone, whereas, if he had once sneaked into his bed without prayer, he would never after that have dared to kneel!

There is nothing like following Daniel's example by never giving in, for thus you will win the respect of those who otherwise would have sneered at you. How soon the world will find out our real meaning! We may *think* we are playing our game so prettily that they cannot make us out and that we shall be pleasing the world and pleasing God too, but it always comes to a dead failure, and then, while the world despises, we have not the comfort of our conscience to sustain us. Oh, if our fathers, the Puritans, would but have yielded a little; if they could have made but a nick in their consciences, as some are now doing, then, instead of being cast out of house and home, and prevented from opening their mouths to preach Christ, their yielding and consenting would have kept them in ease and honor; but where, then, would have been that gospel light which gladdens the nations? Where those pure and sacred institutions which they have handed down to us? Now, at this hour, through their intrepid resolution, they remain among the blessed, and men honor them. Let us not, the sons of brave fathers, let us not be cowards. Remember the days of Cromwell, and the times when the godless Cavaliers felt the edge of the Roundheads' sword, and though we take not carnal weapons, but eschew them utterly, let us show our foes that the manhood of England is still in us, and we are of the same metal as our sires.

III. Let us turn to the third point, with which we conclude, **THE SECRET SUPPORT OF DANIEL**. There was something in the man which gave him this backbone; there was a secret something which made him so magnanimous. What was it? It resulted from several things. It sprang from the fact that *Daniel's religion was not the offspring of passion, but of deep-seated principle.*

There are some men whose religion is like the flower which lives upon the surface—they soon dry up when the sun of persecution burns; but there are others who, like the forest trees, send down their roots into the deep soil of principle, who know what they know, have learned thoroughly what they have learned, and hold fast what they have received, and these, in the time of trial, are sustained by springs of secret grace, and their leaf is not withered. Because the Holy Spirit had worked into Daniel's spirit the principles of faith, he was sustained in the time of trial; but I doubt not that Daniel was also supported by what he had read of the works of God in the olden times. He was a great searcher of books, and he had found that in olden times Jehovah was always victorious; the prophet's eyes gleamed as he thought of Pharaoh and the Red Sea, as he remembered Og, king of Bashan, and the books of Arnon; and as his mind flew on to Sennacherib and the hook put into leviathan's jaws to turn him back by the way which he came, he was strengthened. Remembering the works of the Lord, for which his spirit made diligent search, he felt quite certain that the living God would prove Himself true to His own.

Besides, the prophet's spirit was sustained *by what he had himself seen.* He had been brought in close contact with the three holy children who were brought before Nebuchadnezzar. Where Daniel was at that time we do not precisely know, but he must have been well aware of that heroic deed. He had seen king Nebuchadnezzar defied, had beheld the Son of God walking in the furnace with the three heroes, and had seen them come forth with not so much as the smell of fire passed upon them: here was grand encouragement. Besides, *Daniel also had personal experience of his God.* He stood before Nebuchadnezzar to tell him the dream, and the interpretation thereof; and yes, on a yet more dread occasion, without fear and trembling, he had faced the king Belshazzar, when the thousands of his

guests were shouting to their gods, and the king and his wives and concubines in gorgeous state were drinking wine out of the bowls consecrated to Jehovah. That lone man stood erect amid the ribald crew, and pointing to the mysterious letters, read the terrible sentence, "*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*," a monarch's doom proclaimed in his presence by an unarmed man! Was such a one likely now to be afraid! He who trembled not before tens of thousands of fierce soldiers, shall he fear now, when nothing but lions are in his way? Not he. He had looked into the face of his God, and would not fear the face of a lion; Jehovah had overshadowed him, and the den into which he would be cast had nothing in it terrible to him. His own experience helped to strengthen him. He had this conviction that God could deliver him and that if God did not deliver him, yet still such was *his love to the God of Israel,* that he would be content to give himself to die. It is blessed to have such a confidence as this. You good people who are tried, and who may expect to be tried yet more, you will never stand unless you come to this—"God can deliver me; but if He does not deliver me, still I am well content to be a sacrifice for Jesus' sake." Ah, some of you would gladly be Christians, but in the time of trial you give it up; like the freshwater sailor, who, seeing the ship decked with all her colors, and her fair white sails bellying to the wind, thinks it must be a fine thing to be a mariner, but he is not far out to sea before qualms have come upon him; he dreads the storm, and vows "If I can but once get safe to shore, I have done with sailoring forever." Many have said, "We will follow the Lord with Daniel." Yes, and well-content they are to be with Daniel at Shushan in the king's palace, but when it comes to the lions' den, then, "Daniel, good-bye." Take heed to yourselves that you are not deceived with a fair profession which shall afterwards fail you! Daniel failed not, because his love to his God rested deep in his inmost

heart—it had become part and parcel of himself, and, sustained by the two hands of love and faith, he was graciously lifted over the rough and thorny places.

Remember that Daniel is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had enemies who sought to destroy Him; they could find nothing against Him except, "touching His God." They accused Him of blasphemy, and then afterwards, as they did Daniel, they brought a charge of sedition. He was cast into the den, into the grave: His soul was among the lions. They sealed His tomb with their signet, lest any should steal Him by night, but He arose as Daniel did, alive and unhurt, and His enemies were destroyed. Now, if Daniel is a type of Christ, and the Lord Jesus is the great representative Man for all who are in Him, you, believer, must expect that there will be those who will attack *you!* You must expect there will be those who will assail you especially in your religion. You must expect, too, that they will prevail against you for a time so that you may be cast into the den—that they will seek to fasten you in as though you were destroyed forever; but there will be a resurrection not only of bodies, but of reputations, and you shall arise! When the trumpet shall sound, not merely the corporeal particles, which make the man, but the man's memory shall rise; his good name, which has been buried beneath the clods of slander, shall rise to life, while as for His enemies, they and their reputations shall find devouring destruction from the Presence of the Lord! Oh, to be a follower of Jesus, the great Daniel! Oh, to tread in His footsteps wherever He goes! Oh, to be much with Him, whether in private or public! This is a thing to be desired, and though I exhort you to it, I do not expect you to attain to it in your own strength, but I point you to the Holy Spirit who can work this in you, and make you to be greatly beloved as was this prophet of old. The Lord bless us with a solemn

determination never to turn aside from the right, but to follow Christ in all things, and His shall be the praise! Amen.

816 THE WALL DAUBED WITH UNTEMPERED MORTAR – EZEK. 13:10-12

A Sermon
Delivered on Sunday Evening, May 31st, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Because, even because, they have seduced My people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar: say unto them who daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?" — Ezekiel 13:10-12

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Ezekiel 13]

EZEKIEL WAS sent to awaken the people of Jerusalem to a sense of danger. This task was in itself difficult enough since he had to deal with a slumbering people who were carnally secure, but the difficulty was much increased by the fact that a large number of base pretenders to prophecy, both male and female, sprang up at that time, and exercised great influence among the people. They imitated the prophet's speech; they came forward with their lies, and prefaced them with the solemn words, "Thus says the Lord," pretending to have a commission from the Lord of Hosts. Thus the people of Jerusalem scarcely knew which to believe—Ezekiel prophesying terrors, or these pretenders saying, "Peace, peace." Their evil hearts always

leaned to the side of the false prophets because they flattered them grossly; they heaped to themselves teachers who for a piece of bread prophesied as they desired! You may well believe that the prophet's blood often boiled within him as he saw his own labors spoiled, and the souls that he loved so well so fearfully deluded by the baseborn hirelings who wore a rough mantle to deceive. He was not of those who could be content to deliver his message and let others alone, as we nowadays are bid to do, but he turned upon the deceivers, and denounced them with terrible earnestness, because he saw them to be wolves in sheep's clothing devouring the flock.

Now, in these days we are somewhat similarly circumstanced. The true servant of God in his ministry dares not prophesy smooth things to unconverted men and women; he is the bearer of glad tidings to such as turn unto the Lord, but while "the burden of the Lord" is upon him concerning the impenitent, and such as believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ, he has heavy tidings for those who live estranged from God; these he warns of a fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation; he sees before them an eternity of utter destruction, and he proclaims the day of vengeance of his God. To deliver these mournful warnings boldly and fearlessly is no easy work, and to bring men to receive them is a labor impossible apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. Men love present pleasure and license, and they hate to be told of the day when these things shall be required of them. Why toll the funeral knell when men love merry peals? Nor is this all, for as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do false prophets withstand us. Even at this hour there are those who oppose us, those who are always speaking smooth things to the people. With Satan at their head, that arch-master and prince of deceivers, there is a great company abroad in the world who are always saying, "It shall not be so; you shall have pleasure though you sin; you

shall have rest though you disobey, and it shall be well with you at the end even though you reject the gospel of Christ." Not in so many words, but in effect this is the loud proclamation of the messengers of Satan who are permitted to buffet us. A prophet's courage is still needed by preachers of the Word of God. O may we be able to say with Wesley—

"My life, my blood, I here present,
If for Your truth they may be spent:
Fulfill Your sovereign counsel, Lord!
Your will be done, Your name adored!
Give me Your strength, O God of power!
Then let wind blow, or thunders roar,
Your faithful witness will I be:
'Tis fixed! I can do all through Thee."

Tonight we shall try, and may our puny power be strengthened by the power which comes from on high, to talk with any who may have been lulled into a state of false peace by anything to which they have listened of late, or who may have fallen into evil security simply by their own desires, their wishes being fathers to the deceitful hope that there is peace for them while yet they are living in sin.

I. Not taking up your time with any kind of preface, I shall advance at once to the text, and you will notice that **THE TEXT SPEAKS OF A WALL**.

It is a remarkable fact that the most ungodly men, who persist in sinning with a high hand, nevertheless are very pleased if they can find some defense for their sin. These men of Jerusalem were exceedingly gratified when they could get some wall, no matter how rotten it might be, behind which they might shelter themselves. Some are such outrageous offenders that they can sin boldly with a brazen face, and scorn to invent

an excuse, but 999 out of every 1,000 prefer to have some kind of apology, some sort of hope, some refuge to which in the hour of danger they can flee. Men look about them to discover some sort of wall or other behind which to shelter from conscience and divine threats. I suppose this is because conscience is not quite dead in any man; in some men it has been so drugged and chloroformed that it never seems to act with anything like vigor, and when it speaks it is only with a still small voice, and not at all with the thunder which its voice ought to have to the mind of men; yet that little relic of conscience which with a microscope you can detect in all men, needs to be pacified, and men are glad if by any lie, however barefaced, they can create an excuse by which they may go on quietly in their sins. Sing men a soft song of peace in sin, and safety out of Christ, and they will cry your name up to the skies. You shall have a ready market, for every man will be a buyer.

Perhaps the greatest wall behind which men in London shelter themselves is that of *utter indifference to anything like divine truth.* To men of all classes the great bread and cheese and jacket question is the grand question of the day, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? And how shall we be clothed?" Let a man attend to his business, and what other care need he have? Let the working man go about his toil, and give a fair day's work for a fair day's wage, and what has he to do with the world to come? Let the merchant meet his bills, and keep clear of the bankruptcy court, and what has he to fear as to the court of heaven? Why need he worry his head about dying and rising again from the dead? The mass of mankind, though they will put up with religion, and will even show some sort of interest in it, and some decent respect thereto, yet have no more sense of its reality or its power than the swine that feed at a trough. Look at these dense masses thronging the thoroughfares of this huge city, and answer me—Are not the most of them like the

stones in Jordan's bed, dead and lifeless as to spiritual things? What care they for heaven or hell? What care they about the precious blood of Jesus, or about the power of the Holy Spirit? It is a great deal more important question to them what horse won the Derby, or what turf speculator gained thereby, than to ask who is going down to hell, or who has an interest in the precious blood of Christ! Some silly dancer at the opera; some new invention; some novel trick of magic; some fresh anything or nothing, and the world is all agog; but as to things which will outlast sun and moon, and stand fast when yon blue heaven, like a scroll, has been rolled up and put away—these all-important things our wiseacres think but trifles, and they continue trampling God's eternal truth beneath their feet as swine trample pearls! And they rush madly after the bubbles of this world as though they were all that men were made to hunt after—this is the wall behind which many men hide. "It really does not matter, it will be all right at the last; why make so much ado about it? Let a man mind his business, and take what comes." Alas. Alas, for an age given up to eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage; has it never heard of Noah's flood, or of that greater deluge which so soon will sweep them all away? The great hailstones and tempest of last Friday fluttered them a little, but they went to their sports again when the flashes of lightning had ceased.

Numbers, however, are not quite so stupid, so besotted, so blind, so brutalized as to put up with this. They have a heart which palpitates with a measure of spiritual fear, and will not be silenced by gross material considerations; like a crying child, their conscience will be heard; like a horse-leech it ever cries, "Give, give," and will not be content. Who comes next? Who is the anointed one of Satan to quiet this spirit? Who will yield a quietus to an alarmed mind? See yonder priest pointing to *the wall of ceremonies* behind which many rest so contentedly? Were

you not christened? Oh, the blessedness of that christening—a thing which is as gross a piece of evil as ever was practiced by Mohamed, which has no more warrant in the Word of God than the baptism of bells, or the burning of Hindu widows, and yet this idle farce, this wicked mockery, this god-fathering and god-mothering, is no ordinance of God's, but an invention of the Pope of Rome; this is a soul-saving thing, supposedly, and regenerates the children that are subjected to it! Behind this wall of baptismal regeneration, crowds find a temporary rest. And then comes the "confirmation," another rite of imbecility, a rite, again, which has no Scriptural warrant, but is a piece of nonsense and falsehood from beginning to end! Then follows what priests call a "Sacrament," a blessed ordinance if rightly used to those who are saved, but a dreadful perversion if administered to unsaved persons with the idea that through bread and wine, which can only enter into the stomach, divine grace can be communicated to the heart—as if spirituals could be wrapped up in carnality—as if the infinite grace of the blessed Father could be brought to us by cakes which the baker bakes in the oven, or wine that runs forth from the winepress trod from the grapes of earth! Yet are there thousands of people, no, millions of our fellow men, not Romanists either, so they say, who think that the christening, and the confirming, and the "Sacrament," and perhaps the priestly burial at the last will make it all right. Has not God declared, "Incense is an abomination unto Me; your new moons, and your appointed feasts My soul hates"? And in saying that, He is plainly showing that outward ceremonies, apart from a gracious heart, He could not bear! Outward ordinances, even when most gorgeous, are nothing when compared to walking and living righteously. To walk before God in holiness—this is acceptable to Him, not the visible, not the symbolical, not the outward, but the inward, the spiritual, the heart worship—this it is which God accepts.

Go and rend your hearts, not your garments; seek the bread which came down from heaven, not the baker's wafers; think of Christ, and not of your own doings; draw near to Him, and not to the outward altars of wood and stone; bow before the Priest in the heavens, and not before pretenders here below; confess to the Lord, and not to prying confessors. This sacramental theory, which is now forced upon us in England under the name, and sanction, and authority of the national church—this is a wall, a bowing wall, and a tottering fence, behind which hundreds seek to find shelter, but which, as the Lord my God lives, in the day of His coming He will sweep away, and not a vestige thereof shall be left! In the day when He comes to judge the earth in righteousness, woe unto those who cry, "We have eaten and drunk in Your presence," for what is this? Where has God required it at your hands? Woe yet seven times to those who have deluded the people—their judgment is heavy and it tarries not.

There are but few *among you,* dear friends, perhaps, who care for this sacramental theory. You are not idiots, and therefore you sneer at it, but you may be building another wall, namely, that of *selfrighteousness.* This is the more popular wall by far. How many have been piling up their wall, and gathering their wood, their hay, their stubble with which to erect a defense to screen themselves from God by their own doings? They pray so regularly; they read the Bible so constantly; they attend a place of worship with such precision; they owe no man anything; they have a contribution for the cause of charity; they give a donation for anything that is being done by the church of God—and these are their confidences. They have done this and that, and the other. Like the Pharisee of old, they have fasted twice in the week; they have paid tithes of all they possess. It is all in vain that this grand old Book thunders out against self-righteousness—self-righteousness still lives. It is all in vain

that God declares that by the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified—men will persist in trying to be justified by the works of that law which can only curse them, and cannot save them! This Book declares again and again that we are justified by faith, that we must be saved through the righteousness of Christ—its great teaching is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"; but for all that, man goes his way, and declares that he will *force* a path to heaven, even up the steep and blazing sides of Sinai, and will do what God declares to be impossible, namely, lay another foundation beside that which God has laid in the work and person of His dear Son. O my hearers, if you are sheltering behind your good works, I pray that you may be delivered from the delusion, and that you may find no refuge there, for only Christ can save you! The wall will fall, daub it as you will; it must come down; it is no refuge for a perishing sinner—

"What is all righteousness that men devise?
What but a sordid bargain for the skies?
But Christ as soon would abdicate His own,
As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne."

II. And now, secondly, **WHENEVER A MAN TRIES TO BUILD A WALL BEHIND WHICH TO SHELTER, HE ALWAYS FINDS A VOLUNTEER BAND OF READY ASSISTANTS**.

If he were laboring to build upon the foundation which God has laid, a great company would rise against him, but whenever he begins to put up a structure of his own, crowds come to help him. What a multitude there are who will assist a rebellious spirit to build his mud wall of false security! For instance, a man who is easy in his pleasures—how many will help him to continue at his ease? "He is right," says one; "You are a good fellow," says another; and they both try to keep him

in countenance by their company. "Oh," says one, "never care because one of those Puritan fellows has been troubling your conscience." "Do not listen to him," answers another; and so they help to daub the wall, and plaster it till it looks as neat and substantial as if it were built of polished stones! When these people get together you would really believe, to hear them talk, that they were the only wise people in the entire world, and that the men who give due consideration to religion and the next world are positively mad, or infected with irrational fanaticism. If they happen to be of the educated class, it is wonderful how learned they become in matters of which they know nothing. As for boastful talkers, how they weigh us all, and do up our motives in parcels, as grocers do their goods! We have sometimes met with men, wise in their own conceit, as ignorant of religion as the chairs they lolled upon, who in the grandest manner denounce the Puritans, and sneer at "those hypocrites" who are always talking about another world. It is observable that the more their intellects become disturbed by wine or beer, the more they consider themselves capable of passing judgment upon eternal realities—in fact, a man half-drunk is altogether infallible. Meanwhile the men who believe that there is a God, and who love Him, and wish to serve Him, and believe that there is another state, and wish to be prepared for it, are noted down as mere simpletons, or crafty men who would make a gain of godliness. We do not accept the verdict, but appeal to the judgment to come. Meanwhile we can well understand how this unanimity in folly helps to daub the wall when a man has once put it up; all his friends come in to help him with their commendations, emulating one another in their Babel building.

Another company of scoffers will loudly boast themselves and cry, "Yes, you are all right in continuing in neglect of God and of divine truth because the saints are no better than they should be. I remember what So-and-So did once—he was a

deacon; and I know the inconsistencies of Mr. Zealous, and he is one of the parsons." Ah, when they get hold of a few inconsistencies of professors, how they daub their wall with them! Truly they eat the sin of God's people as men eat bread. Then they say in their assemblies, "These men talk about divine truth, but they are all liars; they speak to us religiously, but they are moved by selfish motives, and in private they are as bad as we are." So by bespattering others they comfort themselves; like hyenas and wolves, they delight to dwell among the desolations of former splendor. Behold these men, they pull down the characters of others and then, piling the stones one upon another they shelter behind the wall which they have constructed. If they would let their reason speak, they would know that if everybody else should be hypocrites, that will make hell none the cooler to them when they are condemned to lie there, and that if others should be inconsistent with their religion, that should be no excuse to them for neglecting it, but rather a warning to them, that they, at least, should be honest in their seeking unto God. Yet any filth, especially such filth as this, will do to make untempered mortar with which to daub the bowing walls behind which the sinner's conscience skulks in hopeless hope of rest. These poor creatures can make bricks without straw, and frame confidences out of vanities. Alas for them! They who will be deceived shall be given over to delusion.

A numerous body of daubers gather at the sign of the "Sneerer," in Atheist Street; and with their doubts, or their supposed doubts of Inspiration and Biblical authenticity, are ready to daub and plaster any amount of wall an inch thick. What a splendid barrow-load of untempered mortar that Bishop of Natal brought us from the Zulus; and then the "Essays and Reviews," like industrious hood-men, brought a fine heap of the same precious commodity. Many skeptics almost screamed with delight when they discovered that now,

now, now, there was some excuse for not obeying God; some reason for being in rebellion against Him, because certain figures did not seem to tally and arithmetic was arrayed against revelation. Years before that, they ground up the rocks and tried to make a cement out of them, but the business did not answer; now they revive old infidelities, like old Babylonian bricks made of chopped straw, and pass them off as new productions of the infernal brickfield. The stock doubts are those which were used 200 years ago, new faced, but still the same. Certain men will treasure up worn-out sophisms, and produce them with remarkable dexterity, just when a man's mind is beginning to be awakened, and so manage to send him to sleep again. How strangely ready are men to make biblical difficulties into excuses for impenitence! Did I hear a man say, "I will not believe in Jesus because I cannot see how the Israelites could have multiplied so quickly in Egypt"? If so, I reply, "You fool! Will that make your doom any lighter when you will be called for judgment before God's great bar; or will that be any reason for your sinning against the light you already have, because you do not happen to comprehend everything which is recorded in Sacred Writ?" Perhaps God never meant you should comprehend all His word. What would it improve you if you solve all mysteries? Would that soften your heart? If our salvation depended upon our answering all the difficulties of the Bible, it might be a fair excuse for us if we did not understand it, but as our salvation depends upon our believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and submitting ourselves to the divine will, there can be no excuse for us, whatever our merely critical doubts and difficulties may be, for there is no doubt about the existence of God in the mind of a reasonable man, and there should be no doubt about the Deity of Christ in any man's mind who has once read the four evangelists. If hearing the divine command to come to Christ and live, you do not come

to Christ and live, you may daub your wall with untempered mortar, but it will not stand in the day when God shall let loose the messengers of His justice, and bid them beat upon your defenseless head.

If the wall is built of ceremonies, how many are busy daubing that! What multitudes of books are streaming from the press, books of ability too, all going to show that salvation is infallibly connected with a mechanical process, conducted by specified officials, and not a spiritual work independent of all outward performances! And if you choose to give yourselves up to the fiction that salvation is by forms and ceremonies, you have only to lay the foundation, and there will be many who will compliment and applaud you, and take pleasure in daubing the wall with their little daub of untempered mortar. The priests will bespatter you with arguments from tradition and quotations from the fathers; and their votaries will daub you with soft speeches upon your zeal and discretion. The most impotent of all lies is, by the deep cunning of its friends, made to go upon its belly like a serpent, and to deceive men and women as the old serpent deceived our mother Eve.

I shall not, however, tarry upon this. It is sufficiently plain, that if you will but build a wall of that sort, there will be plenty who will help to daub it.

III. But now, in the next place, **THE WORD OF GOD DECLARES THAT THIS WALL WILL NOT STAND**. "It shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it."

You had an illustration of this last Friday. First there came a heavy deluge of rain. Then huge hailstones descended with enormous force, and a terrific tempest swept over the face of the earth. The wall to which Ezekiel alludes, is one of the cob walls in the East, daubed with bad mortar, which had not been well tempered, that is to say, not well mixed with the straw

which they use in place of the hair which we use in England; when the rain comes it softens the whole structure of such a wall, melts it, and washes it quite away. Such a deluge as that is coming before long to try and test every human hope. It comes to some men when they enter upon times of spiritual trial. It is a blessed thing to have this test in this life, for although the trial is dreadfully severe, and although the true and the false seem to be in confusion, yet it may lead to a blessed result. I would not give a farthing for your religion if you have never doubted about it. If you have never had a shaking to and fro in your soul till it seemed that every bone and muscle in your mental anatomy was strained, you never will believe thoroughly well. When these times come, all the daubing with untempered mortar will be swept away by the overflowing shower, and the hailstones which come down upon it, but blessed shall he be whose work shall endure.

But if the test comes not thus it will usually come at death. Oh how many, when dying, have been alarmed with the things which cheered them most before! How have their joys changed to miseries, and their hopes that once were like angels, cast off their masks, and stood as devils before them beckoning them to destruction! Men have counted themselves rich, but as in the miser's dream, the gold he clutches dissolves into thin air, so has their spiritual wealth all passed away. They reckoned that they were saved and near to heaven, when lo, their vessel struck upon the awful rock and was dashed to pieces, and they themselves were cast away even at the harbor's mouth! O soul, if you do not believe in Jesus, if your heart has never repented of sin, if you have never clung to a bleeding Savior, I tell you death will go hard with you. Those foaming billows of the river Jordan will not deceive you. Death will play no merry tune in your ears, and sing you no siren song. That skeleton will be honest with you, will pull off the visors, and take up the glass,

and make you see yourself a rotten hypocrite. If you have been resting upon anything but Christ, death will make you quiver.

And if death does not do it—for some men die like lambs, and like sheep are they laid in the grave (but the worm shall still feed upon them)—if death does not do it, the Judgment shall. There is a Judgment which comes to all men at the moment when the spirit leaves the body. Ah, you who despise God, you will think of divine truth in another way in that hour when your naked spirits shiver in the balances of justice, and God weighs you finally to decide your fate forever. Right or wrong, you will find it no child's play, then! And when after you have suffered for a while, the dreadful trumpet sounds, the trumpet which earth and heaven wait to hear, when the graves yield up their dead, and death and hell yield up the dead who are in them, when your spirit comes back to the body in which it once lived, and sinned, and died. Alas for your vain confidence in that tremendous hour! O sirs, then the walls which are not based upon the Rock of Ages will stand you in but sorry stead. You will flee away from your good works then, and from your ceremonies, and from all those indulgences and unbelief in which you once found comfort. You may flee from them, but you shall not flee from Him who sits upon the throne. From His hands shall flash forth the thunderbolts, from His heaven shall you fall, O you great hailstones, and down to the nethermost depths your condemned, despairing spirit, must descend. This is God's word—this is God's truth. Reject it not. Accept it! Fly to the refuge which the gospel provides, and may the Holy Spirit save you evermore.

IV. And now my last point—and I shall not keep you any longer—is this: **ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, IF WE SHALL BE FOUND LOST AT THE LAST, IT WILL BE AN EVERLASTING REPROACH TO US THAT WE ONCE ACCEPTED THE FALSE HELPS OF OUR FRIENDS.** "Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it

not be said unto you, Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?"

And who will say this? Imagine, but for a moment, a spirit cast away into the land of darkness and everlasting nightshade! There it dwells with kindred souls, and a voice is heard falling on its ear— "Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?" That voice may proceed from many lips. It may come *from the lips of Jesus.* "I said to you, 'Come unto Me and live,' but you would not come; you refused the refuge which I presented to you, and you chose your own works, and rested in ceremonies of your own devising, and now where is the daubing with which you have daubed it? Where are your good works and your prayers now? Lost soul, you would not have My blood—where are your good works and your self-righteousness now? You would not come and trust in Me alone—where are your christenings and your confirmations, and all your inventions? Now that you are cast away without hope, what do you think of them? Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?"

I could imagine such a voice as that coming *from a faithful minister,* or other Christian laborer, who may have honestly pointed out to you the one and only way of salvation. You shall hear ringing through those halls of woe the voice that addressed you tonight. If you perish, your memory shall make you remember the very tones I use. I told you you would perish if you did not trust in Christ, but you sought salvation somewhere else, and you shall hear me saying, then, to you, "Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?" Some of you young women may hear the voice of that dear mother in Israel who has sought to bring you to Christ, whose loving tenderness you have made so light of. Some of you shall listen to a father's voice, whose earnest warnings you have despised. Each one educated within the gospel's pale shall hear the voice ringing from the servants of God who sought your good—

"Where, after all, are your hopes? Where are your delusions and your false trusts?" "Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?"

And there shall come another voice, with quite another tone—a hoarse and horrible voice—a voice full of malice and of grim laughter, which shall say, "Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?" You shall understand it to be the voice of him who once deceived you—the fallen spirit, *Satan.* Ah, how he will rejoice! How he will make merry with you when he shall have led you away from the cross to the crucifix; when he shall have enticed you from Christ to the parish priest; when he shall have allured you from the Bible to the traditions of men; when he shall have charmed you away from the heavenly messenger, to defile yourself with the pleasures and frivolities of this world. He who was your deceiver here shall become your tormentor hereafter, and he will say, "Your church attendance and your chapel attendance, your baptism, your sacrament-taking, your readings of the Bible—where are these now? Your hearts were not right in the sight of God any more than mine, and you are damned as I am." Ah, I pray you escape for your lives, lest the arrows of Satanic malice pierce you through and through when the walls of your false hope are overthrown!

There shall be heard amidst that thick darkness and horrid gloom that never shall be broken by a ray of light, another voice which once you knew. Perhaps the husband shall hear the voice of the wife, who shall say, "Ah, where is the daubing with which you have daubed it? You would not let me go to the house of God; you laughed me out of my religion. I was once a young unmarried woman, who cared for the things of God in some respects; you courted me and enticed me away from my father's God, and then you laughed me out of my prayers and Sunday worship; you have laughed me into hell, but you cannot laugh

me out of it again." There will be one railing upon the other, the friend upon the friend, and those who have sinned together, grossly sinned, piercing each other through and through with bitter recollections, and taunting jeers. "Ah," says one, "you took me to the beer house. I came a young man fresh from the country to work in that carpenter's shop, and you were the man who introduced me to that ungodly club, and laughed the nonsense out of me, as you said; but now where is the daubing with which you have daubed it? You said Tom Paine understood the whole matter and that you could prove as easily as that twice two make four, that there was no truth in the Bible; but where now is the daubing with which you have daubed it? Find me now but a drop of cold water to cool me upon this bed of flame! Come here now, and stop this palpitating heart, you loud-voiced jester whose wit was liable to set the table on a roar! Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?" Recriminations will be exchanged among the lost, and will occasion much of that weeping and gnashing of teeth which is their portion. This is probably the reason why the rich man would not have his brothers come into the place of torment. Ah, how terrible the meeting of the betrayer and the betrayed; the seducer and his victim; the priest and his dupes; the vicious and their pupils; unbelievers and their followers! As glowing ashes heaped together increase the heat, so will companies of sinners inflame each other's miseries! "Bind them up in bundles to burn them" is a terrible sentence indeed. O my hearers tempt not your own destruction; be warned to escape before your false refuges shall be your shame and scorn eternally.

And then, last of all, *your own conscience,* from which you can never escape, which is, perhaps, the worm that never dies, and the flame which kindles the fire of remorse that never shall be quenched, your conscience will say to you, "Where is the daubing with which you have daubed it?" A man cannot have

a worse tormentor than a guilty conscience. This, like a bloodhound, follows at his heels remorselessly. Its deep baying is not to be silenced, and its ferocity cannot be appeased. To be sick at heart forever! Forever a disappointed man! Forever self-accused and self-condemned! O that man was wise enough to dread such a fate! I pray you, unconverted friends, do not commit spiritual suicide! Do not murder your own souls! Condemn not yourselves to despair and remorse, but by God's good grace turn unto Him and live!

I am afraid for some for you good people who come here regularly and are not converted. Perhaps you think you are Christians, while you are not, or perhaps you even profess to be Christians, but the life of God is not in you. Be you not deceived. Members of this church, take heed that *you* are not deceived! Yes, I say to myself, be sure, preacher, that *you* take heed lest you yourself become a castaway! Brothers and sisters, we must be right here. We cannot bear to have any question in this matter. We must, since this has to do with eternity, and with an immortal soul, make sure work here. Down with these rotten walls! With one mighty heave, let every man and woman lend a shoulder and hurl them over! Down with every false confidence, and then come to the foundation which Christ has laid, and build upon it, and say—

"You, O Christ, are all I need,
More than all in You I find."

If we build there we shall build well, but if we build elsewhere, the great hailstones, and the overflowing shower, and the total destruction, will overwhelm us. As you remember this, may God help you to escape from ruin, for Jesus' sake.

817 THE WIDOW OF SAREPTA – I KINGS 17:8-9

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, June 21st, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get you to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you." — I Kings 17:8-9

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — I Kings 17]

THE PROPHETS TAUGHT as much by their doings as by their sayings—they were as truly prophesying to the people by the miracles which they worked, as by the messages which they delivered. There was oftentimes a symbolic meaning in their actions; in fact, they were constantly teaching the people by outward symbols, which, alas, those people were usually of too dull an understanding to interpret, but which, nevertheless, were a sign to them! In the case of Elijah, a prophet of concise speech who said but little, but said that with a voice of thunder, I do not doubt that the narratives connected with his life, are meant to be to us a kind of acted prophesying, full of richest meaning. Let us see what we can gather, this morning, from the inexhaustible barrel, and unfailing cruse of the widow of Sarepta. I know not how it is that I feel bound in spirit to preach upon this incident this morning, but this widow seems to have followed me for the last two or three days with all the importunity of the widow in the parable who would take no

denial; and I trust that there may be some here for whom I bear, under sacred compellation, a message from the Lord. Grant it so, blessed Spirit, and we will praise Your name!

I. Our first observation will be, this morning, that the case of this woman of Sarepta is an instance of **DIVINE ELECTION**.

We are not now inventing anything of our own. We have the warrant of the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession for this assertion, for when He went to Nazareth and opened the book and preached, did He not Himself say, "Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow"? Election passed over all the poor widows of Israel who might have been expected, as belonging to God's covenant people, to be first provided for in the day of scant, and it lighted in sovereignty upon a *heathen*, a woman living in a country which had been accursed of God, and given over before to the sword of the seed of Jacob! Election, I say, passed over all the likeliest ones, and pitched upon her who seemed to be beyond the verge of hope, ordaining in mercy that she, entertaining the prophet, should be saved thereby. Surely, brothers and sisters, we have here an instance of the *sovereignty of electing love*. If divine grace must go to Sidon for its object, why must it select a widow? She seemed to be the least likely person to answer the design of the decree, namely, the *sustenance* of the prophet; were there not *princes* in Sidon with secret stores of food? Were there not merchants who had passed over the salt sea, and knew where grain was to be found? Were there not men of understanding who could, by their conversation, cheer the prophet's lonely hours? No, but though they are great or wise, or wealthy, God bids His chariot downward to roll away from the lofty towers of nobles to the humble cottage of the

poorest in all Sidonia's dominions, and a poor widow woman becomes the object of special grace! Here is an illustrious instance of distinguishing grace, yet not such a striking one as mine, nor such a remarkable case as yours to you. I seem as if I can understand God's having chosen *you*, but I shall never cease to wonder that He has elected *me*—

"How many hearts You might have had
More innocent than mine!
How many souls more worthy far
Of that pure touch of Thine!
Ah, divine grace! Into unlikeliest hearts
It is Your choice to come;
The glory of Your light to find
In darkest spots a home."

The choice is in every case made by the supreme will of Jehovah, and is not ordered according to the will of man, nor the will of the flesh, nor blood, nor birth. It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but He who rules all things according to His own good pleasure; He gives as He wills, and withholds as He pleases, and who shall say unto Him, "What are You doing?"

At the same time it was a most *just* choice. I have never heard anyone complain that this widow of Sarepta was thus preserved in famine. And who could complain? For if the whole people had been all subject to the same pinching need, they all deserved it, and if God's special bounty in a single case turned aside the evil by His own remarkable power, shall not the Lord do as He wills with His own? Is our eye evil because His eye is good? So also in the realm of divine grace—none of us have any right to God's mercy; if you think you have, go plead your rights, and God will give them to you. God shall

treat no man worse than he deserves, but, indeed, infinitely better. "He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." But what if He chooses to give to some His special and abounding grace? Men may quibble if they will, but the only answer God will give them is this, "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him who formed it, Why have you made me thus?" But, beloved, although God condescends not to explain His modes of action, nor to prove His own justice, for who is He that He should stand at our bar, and should speak for Himself, and explain His actions?—yet He is always Just. Who are we, the ephemera of an hour, that we should arraign the infinite, the eternal one, from whose hands we spring? He will do as He pleases. Yet for all this, His throne is settled in judgment and His scepter rules according to righteousness and truth; and in the daylight of eternity we shall all of us admiringly discern that sovereignty was never dissociated from justice and that when God did absolutely as He willed, He always willed to do the thing which was upright and just. The choice was as just as it was sovereign!

But what a *blessed* choice it was for her! She saw her neighbors famishing; all over the land the people felt the bitter pangs of starvation, but in her house there was no need, for bread and oil abounded. This was no luxury, but was similar to bread and butter among us, for the Easterns use the oil as we use butter. There was just plain food enough to support, but not enough to gratify delicate tastes. The prophet had lived upon better fare before, when he had meat twice a day, but now he must do without it altogether. The prophet's Master would not have the prophet be dainty about such things. This woman had enough; meal and oil were to her right royal dainties when there was famine through the land. And, beloved in Christ Jesus, how blessed are we who rejoice in our election! What

food we have! What bread and what oil! No, what supplies of richer dainties than earth could possibly yield—redeeming grace and dying love! The flesh of Jesus and His precious blood to be our meat and drink! If election brings us such stores as these, let us forever magnify the merciful sovereignty which ordained us to such grace!

God's choice of this woman, while it brought such blessedness to her, *involved service.* She was not elected merely to be saved in the famine, but to *feed the prophet*. She must be a woman of faith; she must make the little cake first, and afterwards she shall have the multiplication of the meal and of the oil. So the grace of God does not choose men to sleep and wake up in heaven; or choose them to live in sin, and find themselves absolved at the last; or choose them to be idle and go about their own worldly business, and yet to win a reward at the last for which they never toiled. Ah, no! The sovereign electing grace of God chooses us to repentance, to faith, and afterwards to holiness of living, to Christian service, to zeal, to devotion. Ah, many a man would wish to be chosen for heaven, but he has no wish to be chosen for holiness! Then why does he quibble at election? If he does not wish it himself, why need he grudge those who have it? Dog in the manger, what right have you to howl at those who rejoice in what you do not care for yourself? You do not desire holiness, then why complain that it is worked in others? If any man here wishes to be chosen to holiness, wishes to be chosen to give up his sin—if that is a sincere wish, it is a sign that he is chosen *already*, for such a wish as that could not grow up in his soul by nature, God must have implanted it. Let him be thankful that he finds it there! But, beloved, let us never think about proving our election unless we bring forth fruit unto holiness by the grace of God. If you hope you are chosen like this woman, let me ask you, are you feeding the prophet? Are you daily exhibiting a faith in the

living God? Could you, like she, at the Lord's command, take out the handful of meal and oil, and *believe* that God would still supply you? Are you living as the just do, by faith, in simple dependence upon Jehovah whom you cannot see, but whose promises stand fast to you? If so, you can be sure you are chosen to it, for you have obtained it; you may be clear of your election, for you have made it sure because you have brought forth the *fruits* of it! You are elect unto holiness, elect to be conformed to the image of His Son, predestinated to be one of the family of which He is the first-born and pattern. Inasmuch as you are made like He is, this proves that you are ordained to be made like He, and you may rest and rejoice therein. I beseech our friends never to be afraid of that doctrine of election when they hear it spoken of; it is not to be controverted about every day in the week, and insisted upon as though it were the whole gospel, for it is only one truth of God among many, but it is a very precious one. There are certain preachers who get this doctrine into their theology as the organ grinders get a tune put into their barrels, and they can never grind out anything but election, over, and over, and over again! Such persons bring a most Scriptural doctrine into disrepute, but at the same time, it is an indisputable truth of Christianity, and one full of the richest comfort to the child of God—one which is intended to kindle in him perpetual flames of adoring gratitude, a truth which lays him low, and makes him feel that there is nothing in him, and then raises him up and bids him, like a seraph, adore before the throne of God! Distinguishing grace is a fact! Prize the truth, and hold it firmly! Live upon Jesus Christ! Bless Him that you are made a partaker of His eternal love!

There will always be some who will pervert and wrest this doctrine, as they also do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction, but I hardly think I need stop to speak to them.

Still, there are some who say, "If I am to be saved, I shall be saved." Did they ever hear of a certain Ludovic, an Italian philosopher who had imbibed the idea of predestination to the exclusion of every other truth of God? He could see nothing but *fate,* and thought religions activity useless. A physician who attended him during his sickness, a godly man, desiring to convince him of his error, said to him as he stood by his bedside, "I shall not send you any medicine; I shall not attend to you, in fact, I shall not call any more, because if you are to live, you will live, and if you are to die, you will die; therefore it is of no use my attending to you." He went his way, but in the watches of the night, Ludovic, who had been the slave of a notion, turned it over and saw the folly of it; he saw that there were other truths besides predestination, and he acted like a sane man. As God accomplishes the healing of the sick by the use of medicines, he usually accomplishes also the saving of souls by the means of grace; and as I, not knowing whether I am elected to be healed or not, yet go to the physician, so I, not knowing whether I am elect to be saved or not, yet will go to Jesus as He bids me go, and put my trust in Him. And I hope I shall be accepted in Him. Dear hearer, do not trifle away your soul by thrusting your head into doctrinal difficulties! Do not be a fool any more, but go to Jesus as you are, and put your trust in Him, and you will not find this knotty point a terror to you; it will indeed become like butter in a lordly dish to you; it will be to you savory meat such as Isaac's soul loved; and as you feed upon it you will become like the three holy children in Babylon, both fatter and fairer and more lovely than those who have not received this precious truth of God!

II. A second truth we learn from the text is the doctrine of the **SECRET OPERATIONS** of God upon the human heart.

This is illustrated here, for we read, "I have commanded," and yet we do not find that the Lord had spoken a single word

to this woman, certainly not by Elijah, and I do not know that there was any other prophet at that time within reach of her. No command had been given, and yet God said, "I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you." She does not appear to have been at all aware that she was to feed a prophet; she went out that morning to gather sticks, not to meet a guest; she was thinking about feeding her son and herself upon the last cake, certainly she had no idea of sustaining a man of God out of that all but empty barrel of meal! Yet the Lord, who never lies, spoke a solemn truth when He said, "I have commanded a widow woman there." He had so operated upon her mind that He had prepared her to obey the command when it did come by the lip of His servant the prophet. Even thus, and blessed be God for this comforting truth, long before the minister is sent to preach the gospel, *God* prepares the hearts of men to receive the word! Long before the actual living message comes as a matter of instruction to them, there have been secret operations, both of providence and of grace, which have been making ready a people prepared of the Lord who shall be called in the day of His power. Beloved, there is a time, no doubt, when the Spirit of God begins to operate upon the heart of saved ones, but even from infancy the grace of God begins to prepare the heart for salvation, and long before conversion all the moral agencies, all the providential afflictions, and indeed all the events of life have been working together to prepare that character for translation from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. There are gracious operations long before there are operations of the Spirit of grace. I call them gracious because they are directed *by* grace; though they are nothing more than moralizing, restraining, or awakening operations, when I came to preach, this morning, I did not know who may be in the crowd, but I did know that I would preach to a picked

congregation whom God had Himself selected, and that I would speak to some who need me, and to whom I am sent of God! There will be tinder somewhere for my sparks, and though there will be many to whom the discourse will be worth nothing, yet there will be chosen ones to whom it will be the power of God! Still does the widow woman meet Elijah—she may not know why she comes, she may come with a very low motive, as it were only to gather a few sticks, but the *Lord* has sent her; no one can give God's message to her but the chosen preacher, and she is the woman who must receive his word. So in all places where my brothers in the ministry are preaching, the Lord not only sends His servants, but sends the persons whom He means them to meet! He equally prepares the preacher and the hearer.

It is to be hoped that many here have been hopefully prepared for the reception of God's gospel; for they are the *children of godly parents.* I would sincerely hope that when the gospel comes to them, they will receive it because they have seen the proof of it in their mother's piety, and in their father's holiness. I trust that having known, like Timothy, the Scriptures from their youth, they will be like the thirsty land which gapes with huge cracks as if thirsting to drink in the blessed shower, and not as the hard rock which turns an ungrateful surface to the gentle dew of heaven. I trust there are some here, young in years, of whom the Lord has said, "I have commanded a little girl, or a young lad, to receive Jesus today."

Many I know have been prepared for the gospel by having *long attended the ministry.* Ah, though you are not saved yet, I hope that God is getting you ready for that day of effectual grace! How have I knocked at the doors of some of your consciences; surely, the mark of the hammer may be seen there now. You have found it hard to sin, though you have gone on sinning; you have been almost persuaded, though not persuaded after

all. Still you are not what you once were; you have been sobered; you have been made to think; you have become uneasy; the sinful pleasures which were sweet to you have been abandoned; you cannot altogether shake off the thoughts of eternity, of judgment, and of the life to come. Ah, well, I hope this preparation will not, after all, turn out to be a bud that does not knit, an upspringing blade that never comes to the ear, but may divine grace even now lead you to Jesus, for today is the accepted time—today is the day of salvation! May you be as ready for the gospel today as the widow woman was for Elijah when he met her with Jehovah's command!

Many are prepared by *providential trials*. I have blessed God a hundred times that He does not leave His preachers to do the work of winning souls alone. When I have gone to see the sick, I have felt that my Lord has been there preaching sermons which have touched flesh and blood, and pierced to the very quick, while my words alone would only have gone in one ear, and out the other. He has laid that dear child dead, and the mother cannot forget that her infant has gone to heaven while she is on another road; there is the husband looking down upon the corpse of the beloved wife, and he cannot laugh at death and eternity now—there is space for a word of admonition now. Ah, when you come fresh from the bed of fever, when you come here after having been detained at home by weeks of illness and weariness, then is my time with you! God has broken up the clods, plowed up the fallow ground, cut up the thistles, and made room for His good seed so that it may fall where it shall live and grow! Be thankful for your troubles if they prepare you for the gospel, and if any of you have come up here this morning fresh from fiery trials, now that you are like melted wax, may God put the seal on you, lest if you grow cold any more you may never be melted again, and never have

another opportunity of receiving the stamp of the cross of Jesus, the mark of the genuine Faith in a bleeding Savior.

Others are prepared for immediate salvation, because the *Spirit of God* is actually resting upon them, though they know it not. There are the incipient germs of repentance; there is the embryo of faith; there is *everything* which goes to make the Christian life—but it has not as yet come to such development as to be known to be such. When the minister's voice or the Word of God in the Bible shall explain and enforce the truth of God, the man will perceive it, and discover himself to be in Christ! The observation may arise in some mind, "Well, if this is the case, that God is preparing for the gospel, could we not dispense with the ministry altogether?" This is unreasonable. This, instead of putting the ministry on one side, will have with every thoughtful mind the opposite effect. How it ought to encourage us to preach if there are some who are ready for it! Well may we distribute the bread of life when there are hungry souls waiting for it! Well content may we be to compel them to come in that the house may be filled, when there are the poor and needy under the hedge, and in the highways who feel their need of the sacred banquet! How this ought to cheer the Christian minister! No man is better pleased to go fishing than he who fully believes that he shall catch abundance of fish—no warriors march more cheerfully to the fray than those who are assured that they must win the victory. The certainty of success inspires a man to be doubly earnest. The preacher feels that he should be in arduous labors yet more abundant, when he perceives that all these labors are backed up by the providence of God, and made effectual to the most divine ends. Send your servant to sow the seed upon a rock, and to plow all day, and see if he does not grow weary with his useless labors; but if you give him a good piece of ground to till, it is comparatively light work, for he foresees a crop springing up.

Even the worst of men have this mind about them. I have heard that our military prisoners, when they were punished by being made to carry large shot from one end of the prison yard to the other, did not feel it to be so much a punishment when they saw the pyramid of shot at one end of the yard growing larger, and the other diminishing; at last it was resolved to make them carry the same shot from one end of the yard to the other and back again continually, then the sense that they were working very hard and accomplishing nothing made the punishment far more irksome. So would it be to the Christian minister. Give him the conviction that he is really achieving success—success for which God works in His omnipotence side by side with him, and the man becomes strong as the bullock for the draught, strong as the lion for the fight! He can do all things, for Jesus strengthens him.

There are some things which may indicate preparedness for the gospel. Listen, you unconverted ones, and put your hands into your heart to see whether you have any of these. Some men are evidently ready for the gospel because they are out of love with all the world's joys, and are the *subjects of a constant unrest.* They used to be quite satisfied, but they do not know how it is now that nothing pleases them. They were charmed once with the theater, but the drama now seems dull and insipid. The violin and the bowl, the dance and the merrymaking—these were once a heaven below, but by some means, they scarcely know why, they have lost all enjoyment for them. They have accumulated a little money— they hoped that this would satisfy them, but now they say of it, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Literary pursuits which once engrossed them, give them now no satisfaction. Now, you seem to me to be the persons for whom the gospel is intended. Jesus cries, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Let us hope that when the gospel comes to

you, this unrest, though it is not a saving thing, will prove to have been a *preparation* for the saving work! Others we meet with have a constant *dread of coming judgment*. They are somewhat superstitious, it may be, but still even their superstition may become the basement for something better. The fear which haunts men so that they can scarcely sleep at nights; the dread of punishment which overshadows them may in some way lead to the worst of results, but in others it is overruled to drive them to Jesus, who gives joy and peace in believing. Frequently have we met with persons oppressed with great distress of conscience. It is not the Spirit's work, but merely a natural sense of wrong-doing; yet for all this it is a fine joint in the harness for the arrow to lodge in. They feel that they have done wrong; the recollection of some one sin, or of a series of iniquities, haunts them, and they cannot be at peace; let us hope that now these fluttering doves will fly to the cleft of the rock, and find peace in the wounds of Jesus.

It seems to me that God has put a preparation for grace in the minds of those who are of an *honest* straightforward disposition. I do not want to say anything which could be thought unorthodox, and I do not mean it so, but I think where our Lord speaks of honest and good ground, He did mean that there was a good quality in the ground before the seed came—not exactly a saving work, but a God-worked readiness for the seed, and that readiness was *honesty*. You cannot do anything with rogues. God Himself seldom saves cunning double-minded tricky men. I do not expect to meet in heaven a single man who was an habitual shuffler on earth; it seems as if such were never converted. I have met with doubledealing professors, but I do not believe the grace of God had anything to do with them, and whenever I catch members of this church who are not straightforward, I always think of them, "I wish I had known this before you had entered the church, for I would

not have advised the church to accept a doubleminded man, let him be as fine a professor as he pleased." How often are those called by divine grace who wicked as they are, are downright honest fellows. Look at Jack Tar, swearing big oaths, drinking and fighting when on shore, and thinking nothing of it; but at the same time never found doing a mean thing, but transparent as glass. Now, when Jack hears the gospel, he is the very man to receive it, for God has worked in him an outspoken honesty which is like a furrow for the heavenly seed to fall upon! Honest persecutors have often become honest martyrs. Take, for instance, the apostle Paul. What an honest man he was! He never received a conviction but he carried it out at once. He was "exceedingly mad" against the servants of God, but as soon as he knew that Jesus was the Christ, what a bold defender of the faith he became! It delights me to see in men the operations of creation and providence, like secret commands of God, preparing men for mercy, so that when the open command comes with the Spirit of God, the men receive it and are saved.

There are other matters of this sort, but I shall not mention them; I only want to bring out the point that, apart from the Spirit, and before the effectual grace of God, there are workings in providence without, and mental operations within, by which men's minds are made ready for the gospel, so that when it comes, it is as readily obeyed as was the command of Elijah to the widow woman, because, by some mysterious working, God had secretly moved her to sustain him.

III. In the third place, our text affords us an instance of **ACCEPTED INSTRUMENTALITY**.

Here is a woman selected to sustain the prophet—she is poor, and a widow. Brothers and sisters, if our heavenly Father had so willed it, the spread of the gospel need not have required a penny of our money; but He has ordained it from the very

beginning that wherever the gospel comes, it should make an appeal to the generosity of those who profess it, for its support. There are certain persons who say that the minister ought not to be supported, and that it is a very high and honorable thing for him to earn his own living in trade. I have no doubt it is a very honorable thing. I almost envy the preacher who is able, like Paul, to carry on business and to support himself; but I must confess I am very well satisfied to be as honorable as my Master was—and as He never carried on any trade from the time He took to the ministry, but was supported by the free-will offerings of His people, it is, as far as I am concerned, enough for the servant to be as his Master, and the disciple as his Lord. From the very first, when our Lord began to preach, the people entertained Him, and supported Him, and His rule was, when He sent forth His apostles, not, "Pay your expenses, and mind you do not mention anything about money to the people," but, "Into whatever house you enter, eat such things as are set before you." They were evidently to live upon the people to whom they preached, for, said He, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." Now, why has our Lord been pleased to put it so, that the carrying on of the gospel should always require money? There is something so distressing about the very sound of the word *money* that some superfine Christians feel quite ill when the box comes round; they are so heavenly-minded that the idea of *any* allusion to Mammon grieves their blessed spiritual-mindedness! Why did our Lord put it so that there should ever be any need of speaking about funds? Why did He talk of the widow's mites, and sit over by the treasury? Why not abolish the treasury altogether? Surely He was as spiritual as we are! Why did He introduce the topic of money, or render it necessary that it should be introduced? Was it not because the giving of something to God is the truest form of worship, especially when you give till you feel you have given?

To sing a hymn, to pray, yes, these are well enough, but what hypocrite will not do these? What really is there of self-denial in these? If we have sung, we can sing again, and it costs us nothing, but he who gives something, he who like the Sareptan widow is willing to give all of his little, has given a real tribute to the Most High. There is no shame about that, and of all the offerings which come up before God, I will venture to say that the money gifts of His people are among the most real, and the gifts of the poor when they have to deny themselves in order to give, are as acceptable to Jesus Christ as the wrestling of Jacob by Jabbok, or the songs of David when he danced before the ark.

May not our Lord have been pleased to address us in Scripture concerning "the collection," because generosity to the Lord's work sanctifies the toils of earth? During six long days the Lord's people are working among bricks and timber, or in the field at the plow-tail, or standing behind the counter—what a dreary thing were this for an immortal spirit if it could not be sanctified to noble uses! The Lord enables you to sanctify the labor of the six days by bidding you consecrate a portion of the earnings of the six days to Him, week by week presenting your offering through Jesus Christ. It links earth with heaven; it links your merchandise and shipping, your exchanges and warehouses with the heavenly Jerusalem, and its streets. Instead of degrading religion by bringing it down to connection with Mammon, the demands upon your generosity elevate you by enabling you to do something for God, and compel this world's toils to yield a tribute to the Lord of all.

There is another reason for the calls of the gospel upon our purses, which is not at all a small one. God intends thereby to conquer in His people covetousness and earth-love. He calls upon them to support the cause of religion, not because religion could not exist without them, but because *they* could

not healthily exist without giving of their means to the Lord. Even Christians would soon grow covetous if God took not His tithe; if there were no portion for the Lord's poor, and the Lord's work in the world, it would come to this—the greedy shoveling in of all we have, and the putting of it by for our children and our heirs, the adding of house to house, and field to field till we were left alone in the world. There would scarcely be the possibility of Christianity in us if God did not require from us as a loving token that we should contribute to His work.

Then there is another reason, it puts such honor upon us to be allowed to give to Christ. I do not know how you feel, but when I am permitted to give anything to Him who opened His five wounds for me, who gave heart and soul, and all that He had for my redemption, I am full of delight! When I receive I fall flat on my face, but when I am permitted to *give*, a hand is laid upon me to lift me up, and I rise honorably accepted with my gift. You would all feel honored if you were permitted to present a gift to a queen—how much more to give to the King of kings! The cattle on a thousand hills are His; if He were hungry, He would not tell us; if He were thirsty, he would ask no drink from us; but yet in condescending love He comes to us, and His church comes to us*, informa pauperis,* and begs us to assist to support His work among men; and when we give cheerfully to Jesus, we are honored in the giving.

In the case before us God commanded a widow woman to sustain Elijah. Now, if there must be money found for the church, why does not our exalted Head send a few rich people who shall give all of it, and let the poor go free? The Lord very graciously does send a few richer brothers and sisters who give by far the larger proportion of all religious contributions; but I have always noticed that our Lord will never send a spiritual church enough rich people to let them be able to do without the poor, because His intention is that the blessing of being

allowed to give to Him should come as much to the widow of Sarepta, as to Joseph of Arimathea. It is His intention that His rich people should give in proportion, but He never wishes that anything should prevent the very poorest contributing their penny, and receiving the consequent blessing. "I have commanded a widow woman to sustain you." It was a good thing for the widow woman to have such a task assigned her. She was to sustain a prophet. It was an *honor* to her, and it was no loss to her. What the Lord's servant took with one hand, he gave back with the other. And very often we have seen that if God lets His servants give to Him by shovelfuls, He will return it to them by wagonloads at the back door; he will never be a debtor to His creatures. Of course, if they give to *receive* again, they do not give at all—they are only *investing* for themselves; but when they give with a free, willing heart, they shall receive even in this life, and certainly in the life to come, an abundant recompense! Therefore, let the poorest always cast their mites into the treasury. On the first day of the week, let every man lay by in store, be he rich or be he poor. Let none appear before the Lord empty, but bring Him an offering with joyful heart.

IV. Lastly, the text is a specimen of **UNEXPECTED INTERPOSITIONS**.

Here is a prophet to be sustained. He cannot be hidden away anywhere in Israel, for the king is hunting him; he must go into another country. Who will support him? Jezebel belongs to Sidon, if therefore it is once known that Elijah is in Sidon, he will be seized. But a widow woman living just on the border is prepared by God to entertain the prophet. None of us would have thought of such a thing, but so it was, God unexpectedly finds the right woman who does the work in the right way, whose very obscurity and poverty contributed to the security of the prophet. Let us believe in the unexpected interpositions of God; He lets His people reach an extremity,

and then it is His opportunity. You have said, "The last card is played," then God has come in. The ship has gone to pieces, the soldiers are talking of killing the prisoners, the sailors mean to get out into the boat and escape, and yet "some on boards, and some on broken pieces, they all come safely to land." Rest upon God, and remember that He has servants everywhere—he can help you when you have not a friend left, and He can turn your bitterest enemy into your best assistant.

And this confidence, brothers and sisters, should dwell in the church of God in all the times of her need. How many, in this matter, sail upon the wrong tack. Years ago it used to be thought that if somebody, when he died, would endow a chapel, what a good thing it would be because then there would be something certain to keep it up. But there has never been, that I have ever known, a single place in our denomination in which an endowment has not proved a crushing curse! The Lord will not have us contrive to do without Him; He will cast us on Himself. A Church of England paper charges me with wishing to endow the College. I never had such a thought; I would not accept such a thing. I will spend now, at once, all I can get, for the needs of men are great and pressing. Peter and Paul, whatever they had, would have used it personally and immediately for the spread of the gospel, and then left the next generation to do their own work, with the living God to help them as He has helped us. If we should ever come to a point in any of our enterprises, so as absolutely to need help, if there was not any rich person found to help us, God would command a widow woman to do it. If there remained no friend on earth, He would send an angel to do it; He will never allow any enterprise that is carried on with a single eye to His glory, and with simple faith in His promise, to know real lack. He may try it, but not destroy it.

Lastly, this also is true with regard to men for Christ's church. We ought to expect that God will raise up men to preach the gospel in places where we never thought they could be found. He found a widow woman at Sidon to feed the prophet. I should not wonder if the coming man should be found in Whitechapel, or St. Giles, or a Roman Catholic seminary, or the shoe-black brigade; perhaps the mighty evangelist and lover of human progress may even be found in so unlikely a place as among the bishops! It may be possible for Jesus to find apostles among the frequenters of the turf. When God would have the greatest apostle to preach the gospel, where did He find him? Among the *bigots*, a Pharisee of Pharisees! When He would kindle a morning star for England, a man who should translate the Scriptures and deliver the pure truth of God, where did He look? Why, He found a Popish priest, one Wickliffe of Lutterworth! When He would send forth a man who should thunder against the Pope—a man with a brow of brass, and a heart of iron to be a bold defender of the faith, where did He look for him? From a *monastery!* He selected a monk with a shaved crown! "Come here, Luther," He said, "I have commanded you to preach the gospel," and he came! The providence of God may yet make Mr. Disraeli the instrument of dissolving the unholy union of church and state. Grace may, in the same way, select the greatest blasphemer to become the most useful preacher of the age! I am expecting that my Lord will do such things. Every day I expect to hear that there are converts in high places—that the highest Puseyites have left the church, and denounced the ceremonies which once they doted on. I expect to hear that the Roman Catholic cardinals have begun to learn that salvation is by faith and not by works. Why not? It is what our Master has done before, and all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth! He called a widow woman to feed His prophet, and He

has found His instruments in the most unlikely places; why should He not again? He can choose the mightiest trees, and make them fair as the cedar of Solomon's temple; He can raise up children unto Abraham out of the stones of Jordan's stream; He can take men who were full of devils, even till they were called legion, and make them sit at His feet, and afterwards tell of the glory of His power! Rest then in God, you doubting ones! Think not His church is in danger! His cause goes on in spite of foes; it must do so. Pompey said once, "I have only to stamp my foot, and all Italy will turn to soldiers." God has but to lift His finger, and all lands shall be supplied with preachers. Charles I threatened the citizens of London, that if they did not behave themselves a little more loyally, he would take away the court from London, but the Lord Mayor replied, "If His Majesty does not intend to take away the river Thames, we shall do exceedingly well after all." Even so, if Jesus shall abide with us, and His Spirit shall dwell among us, we can lose a thousand helps and fare none the worse. If we can but have the benediction of the Father, and the smile of the Son, and the dew of the Holy Spirit, we shall still rejoice in the Lord, and in His name set up our banners, for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

818 THE PLEIADES AND ORION – JOB 38:31

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, June 28th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Can you bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?" — Job 38:31

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Job 38:1-31]

MOST OF YOU KNOW that singularly beautiful cluster of stars called the Pleiades—very small, but intensely *bright*. These are most conspicuous about the time of spring, and therefore, in poetry, the vernal influences which quicken the earth and clothe it with the green grass, and the many-colored flowers, are connected with the Pleiades. By the sweet influences of the Pleiades we understand, then, in plain language, those benign influences which produce the spring and the summer; these, it is said, no man can restrain. Orion, a very conspicuous constellation with its glittering belt, is best seen towards the close of *autumn*, just before the coming in of the winter. It is a southern and wintry sign, and therefore, poetically, the winter is traced to the bands of Orion, and we are told in the text, literally, that no man is able to loosen the bonds of frost, or check the incoming of the cold. In other words, the whole verse asserts that *none* can stop the revolutions of the seasons. When *God* ordains the spring, the shining months come laughing on; and when again He calls for winter, snow and ice must rule the

dreary hour. The farmer is entirely dependent upon the God of heaven; he may plow with industry, and cast in the good seed with hope, but unless the sweet influences of heaven shall be given, he can reap no harvest. If the drought is long and severe, he cannot cause the clouds to drench the thirsty furrows, or, if the rain descends in torrents, drowning the pastures, he cannot seal up the bottles of heaven; he is absolutely dependent upon God, who governs all things according to His will; and we, who know so little of agricultural operations, being so far removed from the country which *God* has made, and living in the town which *man* has made, we also are as much dependent as any, for even the king is nourished by the fruit of the field; and follow what merchandise we will, ultimately it is still from the fields that our nourishment must come. All of us, then, and not us alone, but all the beasts and birds, and all the creatures, are entirely and absolutely dependent upon God, and unless He helps them, they cannot help themselves. This is the simple teaching of the verse, but it was doubtless used to teach Job that as he could not alter the ordinances of heaven, so neither could he change the purposes of God in the events of providence. You cannot hasten the spring nor postpone the winter, neither can you prevent those calamities which plunge nations in distress, nor prohibit those mercies which lift up tribes into prosperity. Evil comes to the sons of men by God's purpose, and good comes also. Neither is it in your power, O son of man, with all your discretion and skill, with all your economy and industry, to avert the *evil* which God appoints. The scythe of the dread mower cannot be arrested by wisdom—the inevitable hour comes to all. Need and sickness, and bereavement invade us at the Lord's bidding, and although we may greatly mitigate their rigor, yet we cannot avert them, for the ordinances of God must surely come to pass. Whatever is written in the folded book of the divine decree must, in due

season, be fulfilled in the history of man; if you cannot alter, then bow yourself and submit; if you cannot change the purpose, then yield to it and ask to have it sanctified to you. O Job, if your cattle must be taken away, if your children must die, if sore boils must break out upon your body, if you must sit upon the dunghill, if you have no power to alter a single circumstance, then accept the affliction at the hand of the infinite One! Humbly kiss the hand that smites, and say, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him." The doctrine of a divine providence is calculated to create in the minds of the thoughtful and believing, the spirit of resignation. They might perhaps rebel and struggle, if this were of some use, but since it would be utterly useless, since the great wheels of providence proceed in their perpetual revolutions, not pausing for our tears, nor hastening for our groans, then it is best for us to admire it as it revolves, to believe that it is producing good, and to submit ourselves to whatever the Lord appoints.

However, I do not intend using the text in that sense this morning, but as we are told that no man can restrain the benign influences of the Pleiades, so, in the first place, *men cannot utterly prevent the working of the gracious Spirit;* and as men, in the second place, cannot loose the bands of Orion, so men, of themselves, *are not able to overcome those wintry powers which sometimes seize upon the human heart.* We will speak of these two things, and then, in the third place, *the lessons from them.*

I. WHO SHALL BIND THE SWEET INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit does not always operate in the same degree of power, but when His time, His *set* time, to favor Zion is come, then, blessed be God, He is like the dew upon the grass that waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men. It is not in human or in diabolical power to restrain the influences of the Holy One of Israel when He deigns to visit His church.

Many attempts have been made against the church of God, but they have all proven failures because the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit has frustrated all the purposes of the Lord's enemies. The church of God, especially in her early days, has been assailed by the envenomed tongue of *slander*. All over the Roman Empire it was reported that Christians were men of the most brutalized habits. I dare not mention, for the cheek of modesty would be crimsoned, what the charges were brought against Christians of crimes perpetrated in their assemblies. Suffice it to say that among the rest, as they met together to break bread, and drink wine in memory of their Lord, it was said they were accustomed to eat the flesh of a man, and that they passed round from hand to hand and drank together out of a cup of warm human blood. Of course, the populace, believing these horrible stories were violently opposed to the Christian faith. And how did the Christian faith overcome the popular opposition stimulated by such calumny as this? Simply by the power of the Holy Spirit! The sweet influences of the Holy Spirit which descended upon the disciples at Pentecost remained with them, so that when they preached, they preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; when in their private assemblies they spoke of Jesus, they spoke in the power with which they had been endowed at Jerusalem, and calumny was of no more avail than chaff contending with the whirlwind, or stubble warring against the fire. In fact, these very calumnies brought men out of curiosity to behold these atrocious sinners in their orgies of vice, and coming, they listened to the gracious words which proceeded out of their mouths, and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, they believed and became Christians too!

Beloved, this stands good today! Many a Christian has to endure slander, and of the most cruel kind too. To a sensitive heart, perhaps, slander is a more severe trial than even the whip

or the rack. And yet, glory be to God, if our names are cast out as evil, they cannot deprive us of the comfort of the Holy One of Israel! Often, when we are worst spoken of by the world, we are best beloved of our God. The Lord has a way of taking up His people when they are despised and rejected of men, and manifesting His love to them after an unusual sort, so that if the cup might have been dashed with bitters, God pours in so much of the honey of His own precious love, that the bitter is forgotten, and the calumny is swallowed up in the communion. Happy are you, beloved, when they say all manner of evil against you for Christ's name's sake, for you can reply to your accusers, "Can you bind up the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit? Can you stop from my soul the divine and overflowing consolations which proceed from the Pleiades of promise when they shine full upon my soul?"

If calumny does not do, the world has always been ready with coarser weapons—she resorts to *open persecution*. But, beloved, all the persecutions which have ever assaulted the church have never been able to stop the sweet influence of the Pleiades—I mean to quench the work of the *Spirit*, and deprive the church of God of her true comfort! When it has been her springtime, all the blood which could be shed could not thrust her back again into her dreary winter. Her flowers bloomed, her buds began to shoot forth, and her fruits adorned her branches to the glory of our God. Behold Paul and Silas in the dungeon of Philippi! Their persecutors have scourged them, they have laid them in the stocks, they have thrust them into the noisome filth of the innermost prison—but the sweet influences of the Pleiades are felt, and they begin to sing in the dead of night until the prisoners hear them. Behold the influence of these same Pleiades in every place where the apostles went! They were followed by their Jewish persecutors, and they were molested by the Gentile mobs—but their

preaching drew to the cross of Christ a company whose hearts the Lord had touched, and He added unto the church, daily, of such as should be saved! After the apostolic days, often in the midst of the amphitheater, when the nobles and the matrons of Rome, and the Plebs, in all their ranks were gathered together, and a few defenseless men and women were given up to bears and wolves and lions in the midst of the arena, how the sweet influence of the Pleiades fell on them! How they sung their psalms as the lions rushed from their dens, or folded their arms in peace, praising the Lord that He thought them worthy to be partakers of His sufferings! So was it on the snowy Alps! So was it in the valleys of Piedmont! So was it among the suffering Huguenots of France! So was it among our martyred fathers! Smithfield felt the influence of the Pleiades full often when her flames became as chariots in which the saints mounted to their thrones! In the glens of Scotland, among her lone hills and shaggy woods, when such men as Cargill and Cameron opened the Bible and read the text by a flash of lightning, and then preached of the royalties of King Jesus—in those covenanting days the sweet influence of the Pleiades were perhaps more felt than in these softer hours when men learn to sleep under the ministry of the truth—and too many of them are ready to cancel their principles, and give up their hopes if but a little pain should cross their path. Persecution, what have you done? March before us, you cruel ranks of persecutors, each with the hell-brand on your brow; you sons of Cain, you brethren of Korah, you disciples of Balaam—you have *never* been able to impede the onward march of the church of God—no, not so much as for a single hour! Vain were your arts and villainies, for God from heaven fought against you!

Nor, dear brothers and sisters have even the crafty *heresies* which at different times have crept into the church of God been able to bind the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit?

Oftentimes, the very springtime of the church has come, when to all outward appearance it appeared that evil had altogether triumphed. When Popery's power had become consolidated and universal, it was then that Savonarola, Jerome of Prague, and John Huss were raised up together with our own John Wickliffe, to shake the foundations of the throne of Antichrist! At the darkest hour of the world's history the light of God began to shine! These men, when they had either burnt them alive, or consumed their corpses, these men it was supposed, would be forgotten, and their influence would perish from off the face of the earth; for, were not all the doctors on the side of Rome? Were not all the school-men zealous to maintain her dogmas? What were these few men, that they should be able to stand against the old, the venerable, the wealthy? But, brothers and sisters, the old error had to give way, and the light of the gospel shone forth, and a new spring life came to the world, and the time of the singing of birds, and the blooming of the flowers was come, and men called it the Reformation! Rest assured it will be so today; the craft of Satan, and the wickedness of man have invented forms of mischief so insinuating, that they threaten speedily to envelop our land; we have among us a form of Popery in which Romanism is divested of its grosser idolatries, clothed with gorgeous vestments, garnished with attractive pomp, and upheld by the most earnest, and to all appearances, the most pious of men. Will this prevail? Will this destroy the gospel by whose dew the nation has so long been watered? We have among us at the same hour a rationalism, sufficiently cautious not to deny too much, stealthily advancing to its ultimate results, but lingering wisely by the way to talk of liberality, and breadth of thought. This is fascinating to the last degree to many minds, and is subduing to itself hundreds of the more thoughtful youths of this country. Between these two millstones will not Christ's

kingdom be crushed? May we not fear that rationalism and ceremonialism will be like the two hands of Samson, to remove the pillars whereon our house does lean? Ah, not so! If the Holy Spirit does but descend upon the *living* churches of God, and put power into the preaching of the truth, we may safely laugh all these to scorn, and say to the greatest of them, "Can you stand for a single second against the power of the adorable Spirit who is the guardian of the truth of God, the life of the church, the defender of the faith, the vanquisher of errors, the defier of hell, the establisher of truth's empire, and the destroyer of the throne of lies?"

Advancing step by step, I would remind you that there is a great opposition in man himself to the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit. When the time comes for any one man to be saved, his *natural enmity* is sure to be on the alert against the divine power and Satan is certain also to strengthen him lest he should lose his victim. Now, I glorify God in this that you, sinner, though you may resist and grieve the Spirit for a while, yet if He comes to you with omnipotent power effectually to save, you *must* yield, for you, even you, with all your enmity, cannot bind the sweet influences of the Spirit of eternal Life. It is with many men as I have sometimes seen with a village brook—it has been dammed up for some reason, and the water has become a pool. A heavy shower has by-and-by fallen upon the hills, and the full stream has leaped downward. There stands the dam for a little while, but it trembles as the stream swells; perhaps the villagers strengthen it, but if the rain continues to fall, the stream increases in volume, and at last, with one noble outburst, down leaps the torrent, and the dam is swept away like a bowing wall. So with our evil nature—when the Holy Spirit comes, with greater and greater power, descending from the hills of God's eternal purposes, He at last sweeps away every remnant of opposition, and on He sweeps in the

greatness of His strength. "You deny, then," asks one, "the free will of man?" Who says that? I never denied it! On the contrary, I *insist* upon it more than most men. There is no opposition between the doctrine of irresistible grace and the fact of the free agency of man. "How," you ask, "if man is thus irresistibly carried as by storm, how can he be free?" Think, man, and answer for yourself! Were you never overcome in an argument? Did you never resist an argument for a time, till at last another reason was given, and then another, and you could not but yield to the overwhelming arguments? Did you then prove that you had no reason of your own? No, it proved you *had* a reason, and therefore could be mastered by arguments fitted to your reason. If you had been bereft of reason— an idiot—nobody could have spoken of an irresistible argument as far as you were concerned, but your powers of understanding enabled you to be overcome by legitimate force. So with the will—we do not dream, as some falsely imagine, that physical force is used by the Lord with men's moral natures, but we teach that there are appeals and persuasions, arguments and forces which are applicable to the will which, without violating its freedom even in the smallest degree, yet overwhelm it and subdue it to the right and the true, so that the man, with full consent, yields up himself to the full power of divine love. Do not the hymns of Mr. Wesley often express our meaning when he uses such words as overcoming and forcing? As in the verse—

"Save the vilest of the race,
Force me to be saved by grace"?

Such expressions mean just what *we* mean and no more. We do not mean the violation of the *will,* but we do mean this, that where the Holy Spirit comes, though the man's will may have been obstinate enough before, when He exerts His

wondrous influences, He makes the will to yield itself at once. The man is made willing in the day of God's power—the sweet influences of the Pleiades are not bound even by human rebellion!

It is cause for thankfulness also that no man can bind the sweet influence completely after he has been saved. If your experience is at all like mine, you sometimes get into a very horrible state of mind; you may feel as if you had no spiritual life at all; cannot pray—or, if you pray, you do not enjoy it; go up to the house of God, and get no comfort; turn to the Bible, and behold no gleams of light. You get wretched, and you sing with Dr. Watts—

"Dear Lord, and shall we always live
At this poor dying rate?"

Well, all of a sudden, you have such a visitation; you have not had such a time for months. It may be under a sermon, or, perhaps, at the Lord's Table or even in the midst of your business, before you are aware, your soul is made like the chariots of Amminadab; you feel so rejoicing—it is not bodily excitement, it is spiritual life, filled with vigor! Now you can pray; now you can pour out your soul in tears; now you feel most happy and blessed; you wonder how you could have been like a desert before, for you blossom so much like a garden now. Ah, it is this—the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit could not be bound even by your darkness and your death! God determined to visit you, and coming to you, He overcame every obstacle, and made your soul to rejoice with unspeakable joy!

Beloved, it is just so with *a church*. I am sure this church was in about as bad a plight as we could well suppose, for the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit to work in it; I was a scattered flock, and divided and brought low; yet, though there were a

thousand discouragements, no sooner did the Holy Spirit visit this church, than see how it began to multiply and rejoice! During these 14 years the same influences have blessed us, obstacles have been overcome, difficulties have been swept away, and none have been able to keep from us the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit.

You have now before you the thought of the freeness of the Spirit of God, who, like wind, blows as He wishes, and is not bound by human might. Let me only add that although no man can by his own power bind or effectually and finally restrain the power of the Spirit of God, yet the Lord may withdraw His Spirit either from a church or from an individual for a season, and so cause sore distress, and prove that nothing is good or strong without Him. Be aware, therefore, of the Holy Spirit. O you who know His power, trifle not with any of His divine warnings! Be jealous lest you grieve Him; follow His faintest monitions, and in all things do Him honor as your friend and guide. He may depart from the sinner who is not obedient to Him; He may leave altogether, and then such a soul is given up. From the saint also He may for a time be gone, till the good man repents and humbles himself, and then He will return, like a dove, with all His peaceful powers, to abide with Him evermore!

II. Now we shall turn to the second half of the text. There is a winter time both with churches and with individuals when Orion is in the ascendant, and then, though we could well wish to do so, **WE ARE NOT ABLE TO LOOSEN THE BONDS OF THE FROST**.

This is sadly true in individual cases. My dear brothers and sisters, I suppose in your endeavors to do good you have met with *persons in despair*. There are none who more thoroughly baffle all the arts of the human comforter than these. You bring them the gospel, and they see it, but refuse it; if they cannot

help it, they will sometimes get a little light, but only let them have time enough, and they will shut their eyes and get into the dark again. They bring objections, and you answer them so conclusively, that you could almost laugh at them, but they only renounce one set of fears to raise another; you hunt them out of one hole, and you close it so that they never can get into it again, but alas, they make another! You drive them forth again but they find another retreat. They are most ingenious in inventing reasons for misery; they are diligent in the business of tormenting themselves; they are good people, they really have the fear of God. They are desirous of eternal Life—they have it even, and yet for all this, they are involved in a net in which the more they struggle, the more they are entangled. They are like men in the mud of the river Nile, who sinking in it, splash and plunge only to sink deeper every time. Have you not felt altogether confused in dealing with them? Have you not come out of the house and said, "I thought I could comfort people; I had some sort of conceit that I could have brought forward precious promises which might have cheered the hopeless, but I am altogether beaten; I can do nothing." Now you may quote the language of the psalm we sang this morning—

"When he shuts up in long despair,
Who can remove the heavy bar?"

Such cases are not at all uncommon. What a happy day it is when God, having proved to us that we cannot loose the bands of Orion, loosens them Himself, and says to the captives, "Go free." These make the best of Christians, when they obtain liberty; they become among the fairest of the divine family when they anoint their faces with the oil of joy. The terrible experience they have had helps them to sympathize with others,

and instructs them in the devices of Satan, so that they can console others.

If it sometimes becomes a puzzle how to cheer others, I am sure it is so with *yourself*. Whenever I get under the bands of Orion, I find I cannot loosen them from my own hands. There are some very happy, cheerful spirits who appear to have no winter, but the most of us occasionally fall into doubts and fears, and spiritual decays, when our liveliness and joy are at a low ebb—

"If anything is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel."

We are, in the words of the text, bound with the bands of Orion, frost-bound, ice-bound. The soul which once ran warbling on like a clear stream is cold, and hard as a stone; its prayers are like icicles, its emotions like blocks of ice. Then, brothers and sisters, you may try and make the effort, as you ought to do, to loosen yourself from these bands, but you are powerless! Then is that text, "Without Me you can do nothing," learned *experimentally!* Oh, then we feel that we are less than nothing and vanity, while merciless Orion hangs fetters on our soul, and hunts our joys to death. Blessed be God, the warmth of love returns before long, and the Pleiades shine again, and then we, "Rejoice with unspeakable joy, and full of glory."

Now, beloved, this same truth is carried out in our works of faith in connection with *each soul.* You are going into your classes this afternoon, and I would be far from dispiriting you, but I would have you remember that if you attempt to convert a soul *yourself*, you had better first answer the question of our text, "Can you loose the bands of Orion?" It would be easier for you to turn winter into summer, than to turn a child of wrath into an heir of divine grace! You have a task before you

which is utterly impossible to human strength. Conversion is no more in your power than creation. Regeneration lies not with *you*, but men are begotten again by the great Father of Spirits unto a lively hope. Bow before the power of God, and feel at this moment your own utter powerlessness in the work to which He has called you. To turn an understanding from darkness to light, to make the stubborn will supple, to break the iron sinew of pride, and make the neck to bow with cheerful obedience—this belongs not unto you, but unto the eternal Spirit who is omnipotent in the world of mind! Think of this and go in *His* strength—not in your own.

Brothers and sisters if it is so with individuals, it is in proportion equally so with entire *congregations*. We have, under God, as His servants, to save a perishing world; we are sent out as laborers in Christ's vineyard to be the means of reclaiming the wild wastes to the husbandry of Christ; and what a task is ours! How impossible! We had better first attempt to loosen the bands of Orion before we shall be able, unaided of God, to loosen the bands of wickedness, and say to the oppressed, "Go free." The missionary enterprise, apart from *supernatural* influences, is the most insane that ever crossed the mind of man. Yes, I will venture to say that the work of preaching the gospel, even in Christian England, is of all attempts the most foolish, unless we believe in the celestial power which *alone* can make preaching to be of any use. Withdraw the Spirit—withdraw our belief in His power, and our teachings become the subjects of deserved ridicule. It is even so in our attempts to revive a *slumbering church*. I discern a sleeping church pretty readily. When I am preaching in any place, I can soon tell what kind of people I am preaching to by their looks. There is a fire that flashes where there is life; the truth of God draws forth a responsive glance—good men's bosoms heave while Christ is preached! But in some places hearers are stolid, cold, dead; you

might almost as well preach to the green hillocks that surround the church as preach to them; they stir not, they move not, neither can they *be* moved. Now, at such times it is very dispiriting unless one can fall back upon the *belief* that the Holy Spirit *can,* if He *wills,* on a sudden quicken the most dead of all professing churches, and make His people again to live, so that like the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision, they shall stand upon their feet an exceedingly great army, ready to fight the battle of their Master! Can *you* loosen the bands of Orion? Christian, feel your powerlessness! Behold what must be done, and yet how you can do less than nothing in it!

III. Stand here, and hear the voice of God which now speaks to you; that voice I will try to expound in the third part of the subject which consists of **THE LESSONS DRAWN FROM THIS GREAT TRUTH**, that we can neither restrain nor yet command the influences of the Holy Spirit.

On the very surface lies the lesson of *humility*. I trust, brothers, I have no need to say this, for the doctrine before us must have already had an effect upon your minds—while you have been thinking of the power of God, and of your own insignificance, you must have felt bowed down and humbled. It is always dangerous to be useful. It is to be desired above silver, and coveted above fine gold, and yet, when obtained, it has its measure of dangers, for Satan will whisper, even if natural pride does not, "What an excellent man you must be! What qualifications there must be in you! What glory God gets out of you!" "See," says the devil, "hundreds saved under you, and believers comforted under you." And then the foul thought, the wicked thought seeks to build its nest right under the eaves of God's own temple in the heart, "You are something after all." But, brothers, we need to be brought back to this— "You can do *nothing* out of Christ; you are, apart from Him, a withered bough to be gathered and cast into the fire." Yes, you

preacher—powerful, useful, honored of God—nothing but a withered bough apart from Christ! Yes, you goodly woman, you godly, earnest man engaged in the Sunday school or in the Bible class—all speak well of you, and yet you are a cloud without rain, and a well without water, unless you have a vital union with Christ! As well might a child uproot an Alp, as you attempt to win a soul apart from Christ; as well an infant creep from the cradle, and pluck the sun from its place, and hurl the moon into the deep, as you be able to deliver a soul from going down into the pit of hell. Oh, this thought, brothers and sisters; I feel as if I should not speak of it, for it prostrates me before God, and makes me ask Him never to leave me to myself to think myself something, lest He be angry with me, and use me no more.

Should not the next thought which comes into the mind be that of *gratitude* and *adoration* to God? If we cannot command the Holy Spirit's power, yet *He* can. What if Orion's bands cannot be loosened by us—they can be loosened by Him! There is no despairing soul that cannot find comfort when He visits it. "Yes, He makes the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people." "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light: they who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined." He opens the blind eyes, and brings "out the prisoners from the prison and them who sit in darkness out of the prison house." Glory be to His name! Where the human arm fails to work results, the divine arm, with ease, achieves its purpose. And with us here, within our hearts, these gardens so frostbitten can be visited by Him; and if the Well-Beloved comes, the summer comes with all its pleasant fruits. If Jesus will but walk into this garden, and open the doors of our hearts

and enter in, then there will be a paradise where there was before a wilderness. Blessed be the Lord, we cannot have sunk so low but He can lift us up! We cannot be so barren and so comfortless but what He can make us fruitful and give us joy and peace again! There is no church which He cannot revive. Are you members of congregations which are slumbering? Do not despair. You will go home after the day's service, and say, "I wish I could do some good here, but I am only one." No, dear brother, *you* cannot loosen the bands of Orion, but God can! The great Head of His church can suddenly come into His temple, and fill it with His glory. He can rake together the almost expiring ashes, and kindle the fire anew, and bring the sacrifice, and make your church yet to be a temple to His praise. Glorify the name of God, the all-powerful One; never let despair cross your soul. While He lives who made heaven and earth; while He works, who bears up the pillars of the universe; while He loves, who once gave up His Son to redeem us—there can be no cause for trembling. Zion shall be comforted; her days of gladness shall dawn; her winter of sorrow shall flee away: God is on her side, and Orion relaxes his bonds.

There is another lesson, however, which I must not fail to bring before you in a word or two, namely this—behold the *path and walk of faith!* She cannot walk in human power. She has quick eyes, and she perceives mortal might to be a mere pretense, but she walks in the power of the unseen One. "Can you bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?" Faith answers, "I can." If Joshua bound the sun—put chains upon the horns of the moon, faith feels that she can do the same. Can you loosen the bands of Orion? "Yes," says faith, "that I can." If Elijah, after three years of drought, prayed, and the heavens were covered with clouds, and there was a sound of abundance of rain, and he did this by the prayer of *faith,* even so can *we* do by the power of Him who lives and rules in the highest heavens.

Faith has the art of getting hold upon the arm of God, and then, though she cannot stir or move in her own strength, yet she moves the arm of God that moves everything! She touches the motor nerve of omnipotence, and *He* acts whose action is conquest, whose work never fails. O brothers and sisters, if we can *believe* and *pray,* all things will be possible to us, and we shall hold the Holy Spirit bound in this church to remain with us for many and many a year, for He will never depart while His people's cries, and tears, and joyful thanksgivings are like a golden chain to stop His blessed feet; He will be bound and held by us. We may do with Him as the spouse did with her beloved. "I found him," said she, "and I would not let him go." O beloved members of this church, make it a resolution that the Holy Spirit shall not go from us, that we will, with diligent service, and unceasing prayer, and constant gratitude, stay Him and compel Him, seeing the day is far spent, to abide with us! One of the best ways to retain the Holy Spirit is to use what powers we have. Look at our farmers, how busy they have been during the last two or three weeks while the sun was shining, to gather in their hay! We must use every gleam of heavenly sunshine for Jesus' sake! It does not always come, but when a church is favored with it, let it use it to the utmost of its power, for God will not continue to give while we do not appreciate and *prove* our appreciation by making the full use of it. Yes, prayer and faith can hold the Spirit.

Prayer and faith can also loose the bonds of Orion. We will have sinners saved, we will have churches revived, and we will have London yet warmed with the life of God. Not because *we* can do it, but because we will give Him no rest until He comes forth from His secret dwelling place, and makes the power and life of His truth to be known from the ends of the earth!

The drift of the sermon is to cut you off from *yourselves,* and throw you flat on your faces before God. Sinner, you cannot

save yourself! You cannot bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades! You cannot take away from yourself those bands of Orion! But Jehovah can, and in simple faith in Him who offers His blood before the throne of God; come to your Father, and ask Him to do these things for you, and they shall be done, and you shall glorify His name. May the blessing of God descend upon these words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

819 THE MINSTRELSY OF HOPE – PS. 67:6-7

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, July 5th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us."
— Psalm 67:6-7

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Psalm 67; 68:1-18]

"GOD, EVEN OUR OWN GOD." What an exceedingly sweet title! What a loveliness and liveliness of heart must have been in the man who first applied that endearing name to the God of Jacob! Though it is thousands of years ago since the sweet singer of Israel thus spoke of the Lord of hosts, the name has a freshness and even a novelty about it to believing ears, *"God, even our own God."* I cannot resist touching that string again, the note is so enchanting to my soul! That word, *"own,"* or *"our own,"* seems always to throw an atmosphere of delicious fragrance about anything with which it is connected. If it is our country—

"Lives there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself has said,
'This is my own, my native land?'"

Whether it is a land of brown heath and shaggy wood, or a far extended plain, all men love their own fatherland, and in exile they are smitten with homesickness for their own country.

It is so with regard to the house in which we were reared. That old roof tree, that ancient homestead—it may have been covered with thatch, and have been one of a group of poor cottages, but still it was our own home, and a thousand kindly thoughts gather around the fireside where we in childhood nestled beneath a parent's wing. "Our own," why, all our relatives are endeared to us by the fact that they are our own. "Father" is a silver word at all times, but "our father," "our own father," how the name grows richer and turns to a golden word! "Our own child," "our own brother," "our own husband," "our own wife"—the words are most melodious. We even feel the Bible to be all the dearer to us because we can speak of it as "our own old English Bible." As the Jew's book, coming from God in Hebrew; as a book for the Greek, coming in its latter half to the Gentile in the Greek tongue, it was a priceless treasure; but translated into our own familiar Saxon tongue, and, on the whole translated so well, our own English Bible is doubly dear to us. The sweetness of the words, "our own" led me to call the hymnbook from which you sing, "Our Own Hymnbook," hoping that perchance the very name might help to weave your affections round about it. But what shall I say of *"our own God"?* Words fail to express the depth of joy and delight which is contained within these three monosyllables, "Our own God." "Our own" by the Everlasting covenant in which He gave Himself to us with all His attributes, with all that He is and has, to be our portion forever and ever. "The Lord is my portion, says my soul." "Our own God," by our own choice of Him, a choice most free, but guided by His Holy Spirit, so that we who should have chosen our own ruin, were sweetly led to make our election of the Lord, because He had made His election of us. "Our own God," ours to trust, ours to love, ours to fly to in every dark and troublous night, ours to commune with in every bright and balmy day, ours to be our

guide in life, our help in death, and our glory in immortality. "Our own God," affording us His wisdom to guide our path, His power to sustain our steps, His love to comfort our lives, His every attribute to enrich with more than royal wealth. The man who can truthfully, out of a pure heart, look up to the throne of the infinite Jehovah, and call Him, "My own God," has said a more eloquent thing than ever flowed from the lips of Demosthenes, or fell from the tongue of Cicero. You are favored beyond all men, you to whom this is a household word, "our own God"—

> "Our God! How pleasant is the sound!
> How charming to repeat!
> Well may those hearts with pleasure bound,
> Who thus their Lord can greet!"

I think the psalmist used this expression in this sublime ode as a kind of argument and assurance of the blessing which he foretold. "God shall bless us"—that is true, it is to be believed—but, "our own God shall bless us," that sentence flashes conviction upon the most timorous; it wears assurance as a frontlet between his eyes; it bears upon its surface its own evidence. If the Lord has been gracious enough to make Himself our own God, He did not do this for nothing, there is a loving intention in it. If in the tenderness of His compassion He has said, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people," it must be with a design to bless us with unspeakable blessings in Christ Jesus. Covertly, there is a powerful reason urged in the delightful title, and the more we think upon it the more we shall see it.

This morning I intend simply to keep to the words, "God shall bless us, God shall bless us." They have been sounding in my ears like far-off bells, ringing their way with a march of

music into the deeps of my soul. May the same angelic melody charm the ears of all my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. "God shall bless us; God shall bless us."

Three personified passions I shall introduce into the pulpit this morning, and we shall discourse with them a little, or let them speak with us.

I. The first is **FEAR**.

Pale-faced fear will be found everywhere, she meddles with every matter, intruding into the bedchamber of faith, and disturbing the banquets of hope. Fear lodges with some as an abiding guest, and is entertained as though she were a dear, familiar friend; what does fear say to us, this morning, in reply to our cheering text? Fear inquires, "Will God indeed bless us—for of late He has withheld His hand? There have been many hopeful signs, but they have disappointed us; we have expected the blessing for a long time; we have thought we have seen the signs of it, but it has not come. We have heard of revivals and rumors of revivals, men have risen up who have preached the word with power, and in some districts there have been many conversions, but still to a great extent we have not received the blessing; God has not visited us as of old. We have seen the early cloud and expected rain; we have watched the morning dew and hoped for moisture, but all these have vanished, and we are still left without the blessing. A thousand past disappointments lead us to fear that the blessing may not come." Listen, O fear, and be comforted. What if you, too hasty and rash, have misjudged the will of the Lord? Is this any reason why He should forget His promise and refuse to hear the voice of prayer? Clouds have passed over the sky every day these many weeks, and we have said full often, "Surely it must rain, and the thirsty fields must be refreshed," but not a drop as yet has fallen; yet rain it must before long. Even so is it with God's mercy. It may not come today, and tomorrow we may

not see it, but still God is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness; He has His own appointed time, and He will be punctual, for while He never is before it, He never is behind it. In due season, in answer to the entreaties of His people, He will give them a generous shower; all manner of gracious blessings shall descend from His right hand; He will rend the heavens, and in Majesty come down—for, "God shall bless us."

"Yes," says Fear, "but we have seen so many counterfeits of the blessing; we have seen revivals in which intense excitement has seemed for a season to produce great results, but the excitement has subsided, and the results have disappeared. Have we not again and again heard the sound of trumpets, and the loud boastings of men, but glory was not the sum of it?" This is most sorrowfully true; there is no doubt that much of revivalism has been a sham, that there has been a windbag-filling, a bladder-blowing in the Christian church which has been terribly mischievous! The very name of "revival," has been made to stink in some places by reason of the mischiefs associated with it. But this is no reason why there should not yet come a glorious and *real* revival from the presence of the Lord; and such, my brothers and sisters, I earnestly hope for, and vehemently pray for. Remember the revival which passed over New England in the days of Jonathan Edwards? No one could call that spurious; it was as true and real as any work of God on the face of the earth could be. Nor could anyone describe the work of Whitefield, and of Wesley, as a mere spasm or a thing of transient existence—it was God's right hand made bare and put to the work of divine grace in a marvelous manner; and it was a work done which exists in England to this day, and shall remain even to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! We may expect then, since it has been already given at other times, that God will bless His people with

real and substantial advances, and will yet come to the front and make His enemies see that there is an Irresistible power in the gospel of Jesus Christ! O fear, remember, if you will, the delusions of the past and be counseled by them, but do not recall them as reasons for being dispirited and cast down, for God, even our own God, *shall* bless us.

But Fear replies, "See how much there is in *the present* which is unlike a blessing, and which, instead of prophesying good, pretends evil! How few there are," says fear, "who are proclaiming the gospel boldly and simply, and how many, on the other hand, oppose the gospel with their philosophies or with their superstitions." But listen, O fear, "God shall bless us," few though we are, for He saves not by many, nor by few. Remember His servant Gideon, and how he went up to fight against the Midianites, not with the thousands, for they were too many for the Lord of Hosts, but with the few hundred men that lapped, and with these, with no other weapons than their broken pitchers, and uncovered lamps, and sounding trumpets—with these did he put to rout the multitudes of Midian! Say not that Omnipotence can be short of instruments; He could quicken the very sand by the seashore into preachers of the gospel if He pleased, and if He wanted tongues to tell of His love, He could make each stone a preacher, or each twinkling leaf upon the trees a witness for Jesus. It is not instrumentality that is necessary first and foremost, we need most the power which moves the instrumentality, which makes the weakest strong, and without which even the strongest are but weak. We heard it said the other day that the religion of Jesus Christ could not be expected to prosper in some places unless it had a fair start. Did that remark come from an infidel, or from a bishop? If I were asked and knew not, I know what my answer would be. A fair start indeed! Put the religion of Jesus Christ into any arena, and it asks but liberty to use its

weapons; and even where that is denied it, it still triumphs. It only needs its own innate strength to be developed, and to be left alone by the kings and princes of this world, and it will work its own way. To be left alone, I said—let them oppose it if they like, yet still our faith will overcome the regal opposition; only let them withdraw their patronage, that deadly thing which paralyzes all spiritual life, and the unshackled truth of God will most surely prevail! We do not tremble, then, we must not, because the servants of God may be poor, or may not be gifted, or may be but few. God *shall,* even our own God, shall bless us; and if we are as few as the 12 fishermen, and as unlettered as they, yet as the 12 fishermen made old Rome's empire shake from end to end, and laid colossal systems of idolatry even with the ground, even so will the Christianity of today, if God does but return in power unto her, in the midst of her weakness wax valiant in fight, and turn to flight the armies of the aliens.

But Fear always finds room for murmuring, and therefore she says, "The future, the black and gloomy future; what have we to expect from this wicked generation, this perverse people, but that we shall be given up once more to be devoured by the jaws of Antichrist, or to be lost in the mists of infidelity? Our prospects are indeed appalling," so fear says, though I confess, not using her telescope, I discern no such signs of the times. Yet fear says so, and there may be reason in it; yet whatever that reason may be, it is counterbalanced in our mind by the belief that God, even our own God, will bless us. Why should He change? He has helped His church before, why not now? Is she undeserving; she was always so. Does she backslide; she has done so oftentimes before, yet He has visited her, and restored her, and why not now? Instead of forebodings and fears, there seems to me cause for the brightest expectations, if we can only fall back upon the divine promise, and believe that God, even our own God, shall yet, in this very age, bless us as

He did in days of old. Remember the ship tossed with tempest on the Galilean lake? There was, indeed, a dreary outlook for the steersman of the boat. She must, before long, be driven on the rocky headland, and she and her cargo must sink beneath the waves. Not so, not so, for can't you see, walking upon the billows which congeal to glass beneath His feet, the Man who loves the company within the vessel, and will not let them die? It is Jesus walking on the waves of the sea! He comes into the vessel, and immediately the calm is as profound as if waves had not lifted their head, nor wind had blown! And so in the darkest times of His church's history, Jesus has always in due time appeared walking upon the waves of her troubles, and then her rest has been glorious. Let us not therefore be afraid, but casting fear away, let us rejoice with glad expectation. What can there be to fear? "God is with us." Is not that the battle cry before which devils fly and all the hosts of evil turn their backs? "Immanuel, God with us." Who dares to stand against that? Who will defy the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Ah, bring your might, and come to push or pike, you mighty ones, but if God is for us, who can be against us, or if against us, who can stand? God is our own God; will He let His own church be trampled in the mire? Shall the bride of Christ be led into captivity? Shall His beloved, whom He bought with His blood, be delivered into the hands of her enemies? God forbid! Because He is God, because He is for us, because He is our own God, therefore we set up our banners, and each man among us cheerily sings—

"For yet I know I shall Him praise,
Who graciously to me
The health is of my countenance,
Yes, my own God is He."

II. We shall change the strain altogether when we introduce a second character, namely, **DESIRE**.

Quick of step, bright of eye, warm of heart, Desire says, "Ah, God shall bless us, but O that we had the blessing! We hunger and we thirst after it; we are covetous for it as the miser after gold." Therefore, Desire says, "But what blessing will come, and after what fashion shall our own God bless us?" The reply to Desire is this—when God comes to bless His people, He brings *all* grace with Him, for in the treasures of the covenant there are not some things, but all things, not a few supplies for some of the church's necessities, but a redundant store from which all her needs shall be replenished. When the Lord shall bless His church, He will give to all her members the divine grace of revival; they will begin to live after a higher, nobler, happier sort than they have done before. To bestir the church, and make it active, is one of the highest gifts of the Holy Spirit, and this is greatly needed. I believe it is needed among us. Some of the most earnest Christians out of heaven are members of this church, but some are a very long way off from that, and need to be brought into a sounder spiritual state. What is true of this one church is true of all the churches of Jesus Christ. They are too much like the virgins who slept because the bridegroom came not—too much apathy, too little love to God, too little consecration to His cause, too little pining and panting after the souls of men. When the Lord shall visit His church, the first effect will be the quickening of the life of His own beloved: then will the blessing come in the next shape, namely, conversions in her borders, and additions to her membership. I hope that we shall never think that God is blessing us unless we see sinners saved; it is a very solemn delusion when ministers think they are prospering, and yet do not hear of conversions. We, I trust, will be most uneasy if conversions should slacken in number among us. If God

returns to us, and to all His churches, the cry will be heard on the right hand and on the left, "What must we do to be saved?" The astonished church will see such a multitude of children born to her that she will cry in amazement, "Who has begotten these? Who are these who fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" When these two blessings come, a quickened church and souls converted, then will the word of the Lord be fulfilled, "The Lord will give strength unto His people, the Lord will bless His people with peace." Then the church will be strong; she will have the wherewithal to refute her adversaries by pointing to her converts; she will become bold because she sees the result of her work; she will cease to doubt, for faith will be replenished with evidences. Then peace will reign. The young converts shall bring in a flood of new joy; their fresh blood shall make the old blood of the church to leap in its veins, and old and young rejoicing together shall rejoice in the abundance of peace. Brothers and sisters, I would if I had time this morning, paint you a picture of a church blessed of God; but we must not; you know what it is—many of you have been members of such a church. May the blessing continue, may it be increased, and may all the churches throughout Christendom receive the benediction from the God of Israel such as shall make them rejoice with joy unspeakable!

But Desire says, "I see what the blessing is, but in what degree will God give it, and in what measure may we expect it?" We say to Desire, "O you large-hearted one, God will give you according to the measure of your confidence in Him." We are all too soon satisfied when the blessing begins to drop from above; we stop, like the king of old, when we have shot but one or two arrows, and deserve to be rebuked in the language of the prophet, "You should have smitten five or six times, then had you smitten Syria till you had consumed it." We are content

with drops when we might have the cup full to the brim; we are childishly satisfied with a mere trace of water when we might have flagons, barrels, rivers, oceans if we had but faith enough to receive them! If there should be half-a-dozen persons converted today in this house, we should all be jubilant with thanksgiving, but ought we not to be *sorry* if there are not half-a-dozen *hundred?* Who are we that, by our narrow expectations, we limit the Holy One of Israel? Can we draw a line around Omnipotence and say, "To here shall You go, but no further"? Were it not wiser to extend our desires, and expand our hopes since we have to deal with One who knows neither limit nor boundary? Why not look for years of plenty, eclipsing the famous seven of Egypt? Why not expect clusters excelling those of Eshcol? Why are we so mean, so dwarfed, so straitened in our expectancies? Let us grasp at *greater* things, for it is *reasonable*, with the Lord to trust in, to look for greater things. I reckon upon days in which every sermon shall shake the house with its power, in which the hearers shall be converted to God by thousands as in the day of Pentecost. Was that to be the greatest trophy of God's power, the Pentecost? Is the first sheaf to be greater than the harvest? How can it be? We believe that if God will again visit His church, and I trust He is going to do so, we shall see nations born in a day, and the gospel of Jesus, which has painfully limped like a wounded hind, will suddenly take to itself wings as of a mighty angel, and fly throughout the midst of heaven, proclaiming Jesus Christ both Lord and God. Why not? Who can justify the absence of the liveliest hope, since He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think?

I hear Desire say, "Yes, I understand what the blessing is, and that it can be had in any measure, but how is it to be obtained, and when will it come?" Follow me in a very brief review of the Psalm before us, because that will help us to

answer the question, When is it that, "God, even our own God, shall bless us?" The Psalm begins with "God be merciful unto us"; that is the voice of a *penitent* people confessing their past misdeeds. God will bless His church when she acknowledges her faults and humbles herself; when, with an evangelical repentance, she stands before the mercy seat, and cries, "God be merciful unto us." We must never expect that the Lord will bless a proud and conceited church, a hard-hearted and indifferent church. When humbled and laid in the dust under a sense of her own shortcomings, then shall God be pleased to look upon her in mercy. I gather from the tenor of the first verse, that God blesses His people when they begin to pray as well as when they confess their sins. The prayer is urgent, humble and believing, and therefore it must speed. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us." These agonizing desires are a part of the wailing of a church conscious of having somewhat lost the blessing, and ill at ease until it is restored. We are sure to receive the benediction from God when the entire church is instant and constant in intercession! Prayer is the best resort of an earnest people. Are we not witnesses of it? We have had prayer meetings in this house in which we have all been stirred as the trees of the woods are moved in the wind, and then we have always had the presence of God afterwards in the conversion of souls. Our best praying times have always been followed by joyful harvest homes. The churches everywhere must be prayerful—intensely so—or else they cannot expect that the sound of abundance of rain should be heard throughout their land. Awake to confess sin, O Zion, awake to soul-travail for the souls of men, and then shall God, your Lord, visit you from on high! Come, Holy Spirit, and awaken Your slumbering people; bestir Your sluggard host, for when Your power is felt, then has the bright day of triumph dawned upon us!

As the Psalm runs, it speaks not so much of prayer as of praise, "Let the people praise You, O God; let all the people praise You. Then shall the earth yield her increase." The church of God needs to get into a better state with regard to her praising her God. When God's mercy is received, if we accept it silently, and without gratitude, we cannot expect to have more; but when every drop of favor makes us bless the Lord who gives to such undeserving ones, we shall soon have more, and yet more, and more! The praise ought to be universal. "Let all the people praise You." It ought to be joyful and hearty, each man rejoicing in the exercise, and casting all his strength into it. When shall we all wake up to this? When shall all the Lord's elect magnify His glorious name as they should? When shall we sing at our work, sing in our households, sing *everywhere* the praises of God? If prayer and praise are sacredly blended, and the church becomes thoroughly anxious for the divine blessing, then God, even our God, will bless us.

If I were asked now to give some indications as to when a blessing may be expected, I would have to run somewhat in the same vein as we did last Thursday evening, but that I cannot avoid. I believe that when a great visitation of divine mercy is coming upon the church, there are certain signs which are given to the more spiritual, which assure them that it is coming. Elijah could hear "a sound of abundance of rain" before a single drop had fallen, and many a saint of God has had the conviction that a time of refreshing is coming long before it has come. Some souls are especially sensitive to divine workings, just as some men's bodies are peculiarly sensitive to changes of weather before they arrive. As Columbus was sure that he was coming to land, because he saw strange land birds and floating pieces of seaweed and broken wood, so oftentimes the Christian minister feels sure that he is drawing near to a time of amazing blessing; he can scarcely tell another why he feels so sure, and

yet the indications to him are sure. There are doves that come flying into our hands that tell us that the waters of indifference and worldliness are receding; they bring us olive branches of hopeful graces flourishing among our people which let us know that the time to favor Zion is surely coming. Have you ever seen the ancient seer arise, take his harp down from the wall, and begin to tune it? He puts every string in order; he lays his fingers among the unaccustomed strings, and commences to sweep the strings with unusual energy of delight; have you not inquired of him, "Grey Harper, minstrel consecrated to the Lord, why do you strike your song so full of cheer?" He replies, "Because I see afar the silken banners of a triumphant host returning victorious from the fray. It is the church, made more than conqueror through Him who loved her. I hear the moving of the wings of angels; they are rejoicing over penitents, and the church is glad, for her glory returns seeing that her sons are many." Men enlightened with the light of heaven feel the shadow of the coming mercy, and hear the far-off wheels of the chariot of mercy!

These tokens, of course, will only be appreciable by the few, but there are others, tokens which are instructive to the many. It is a very certain sign that the Lord will bless His people when they feel in themselves an unusual and insatiable craving for the divine visitation—when they feel as if the church could not go on longer as she now is doing, when they begin to fret, and pant, and sigh, and hunger, and thirst after something better. I would to God that all the members of this church were gloriously dissatisfied without more conversions! And when this dissatisfaction arises in the Christian mind, it is pretty generally a sure indication that God is enlarging the hearts of His people, that they may receive a larger blessing. Then there will come into prepared minds a sacred heaving of intense excitement, and throes of awful purpose, mysterious longings

to which they were strangers before. These will gravitate into impulses which they will be unable to resist. Men who had been dumb before will suddenly find a tongue; others will become mighty in prayer who never were known as master suppliants up to that moment. There will be tears in eyes long dry before. We shall find professors talking to sinners and winning converts who kept in the rear in days now past, and were never zealous until now. These stirrings of God's hand, these sacred and mysterious motions of His ever-blessed Spirit, are signs that He intends to bless His church and that to a large degree. And, brothers and sisters, when every man begins to search himself, to see whether there is any obstacle in him to the blessing; when every single member of the church exposes his heart to the search of God and cries, "Take away from me everything that hinders Your work, fit me for greater usefulness, put me where You will win glory by me, for I am consecrated to You," then we shall hear the sound as of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, as David of old; then shall we see the flowers spring up, and we shall know that the time of the singing of birds is drawing near, and that spring and summer are close at hand. May God send us more and more of these gracious signs! I think I see them even now. Perhaps my wish is father to my thought, but I think I see comfortable signs that God intends to visit His Zion even now: and if we will but believe it, will but accept it, and work in accordance with such expectation, unitedly praying and praising, and laboring and striving, rest assured this year, 1868, will not come to its close without such a display of the divine power as shall make it an *annus mirabilis,* a year of our Lord, a year of divine grace, a year whose days shall be as the days of heaven upon the earth!

III. Lastly, I introduce to you a far fairer being than either of the other two—the sweet bright-eyed maiden **HOPE**.

Have you ever heard the story of her matchless song? She learned in her youth a song which she sings evermore to the accompaniment of a well-tuned harp. Here are the words of her enchanting poetry: "God will bless us, God will bless us." She has often been heard singing this in the night, and, lo, stars have suddenly shone out of the black sky! "God will bless us." She has been known to sing this in the midst of tempests, and calms have followed the soothing song. Once upon a time, certain strong laborers were sent forth by the great king to level a primeval forest, to plow it, to sow it, and to bring the harvest to him. They were stout-hearted and strong, and willing enough for labor, and well they needed all their strength and more. One stalwart laborer was named Industry—consecrated work was his. His brother Patience, with muscles of steel, went with him, and tired not in the longest days, under the heaviest labors. To help them, they had Zeal, clothed with ardent and indomitable energy. Side by side, there stood his kinsman Self-Denial, and his friend, Importunity. These went forth to their labor, and they took with them, to cheer their toils, their well-beloved sister Hope; and well it was they did, for the forest trees were huge, and needed many sturdy blows of the axe before they would fall prone upon the ground. One by one they yielded, but the labor was immense, and incessant. At night when they went to their rest, the day's work always seemed so light, for as they crossed the threshold, Patience, wiping the sweat from his brow, would be encouraged, and Self-Denial would be strengthened, for they heard a sweet voice within sing, "God will bless us, God even our own God, will bless us." They felled the giant trees to the music of that strain; they cleared the acres one by one; they tore from their sockets the huge roots; they leveled the soil; they sowed the corn, and waited for the harvest, often much discouraged, but still in silver chains and golden fetters by the sweet sound of the voice which chanted so

constantly—"God, even our own God, will bless us." They never could refrain from service, for she never could refrain from song. They were ashamed to be discouraged; they were shocked to be despairing, for still the voice rang clearly out at morn and eventide, "God will bless us, God even our own God, will bless us." You know the parable, you recognize the voice—may you hear it in your souls today!

God will bless us! We are few, too few for this great work, but God will bless us, and therefore we are enough! We are feeble, but little taught, with little experience, and slender wisdom, but God will bless us, and we shall be wise enough and strong enough. We are undeserving, full of sin, fickle and frail; but God will bless us, and our undeservingness shall be a foil in which to set the precious diamond of His mercy! God *will* bless us—there are glorious promises which guarantee the blessing! They must be kept, for they are yes and amen in Christ Jesus! The nations must bow down before Messiah; Ethiopia must stretch out her arms to receive her King! God *will* bless us! He has blessed His people. Let Egypt tell how God overthrew His Israel's enemies. Let Canaan witness how He slew kings, and overthrew mighty kings, and gave their land for a heritage, even a heritage unto His people! God will bless us. He has given us His Son—how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? He has given us His Holy Spirit to abide with us forever; how can He deny us any necessary aid or requisite benediction?

Here is a song for each Christian man and woman engaged in holy work! Here is a song for your Sunday school classes this afternoon, you diligent teachers of our youth! If you have seen no good come of your work, and you grow somewhat dispirited, here is a psalm to raise your sinking spirits, *"God will bless us!"* Go on and teach the gospel to the youngsters with redoubled zeal. Here is a sweet note for the minister who has been

plowing a thankless soil, and seen no harvest. *"God will bless us!"* Cease not from your energetic labors! Go back to your work; for you have such a blessing yet to come that you may well rejoice even in the prospect of its coming. Let each worker go forth to that form of Christian service which his Master has appointed him, hearing this bird of paradise warbling in his ears, "God will bless us." Like David's minstrelsy before Saul, it charms away despair—like the silver trumpets of the priests, it proclaims a jubilee, O that like the rams' horns of Israel, it may level Jericho! Why, if just once this morning I could address with the eloquence of Peter the Hermit, when preaching the crusade, when he made his hearers shout aloud, *"Deus vult."* I too would stir your blood with the war-note of my text. I think this, *"God will bless us,"* might just as much stir you, and move you, and make you dash along like a mighty host of warriors as did the, "God wills it," of the Hermit. God is with us, He will bless us. Why do you hesitate? Why do you grow weary? Why do you look to a human arm for strength? Why do you fear your enemies? Why do you seek slothful ease? Why do you get to your beds of rest? God will bless us! Up, you men-at-arms, and snatch the victory! Grasp your sickles, you farmers, and gather in the harvest! Hoist your sails, you mariners, for the favoring winds are coming! "God *will* bless us." O for fire from off the altar to touch our lips! And what can be a better instrument with which to carry the flaming coal, than the golden tongs of the text, "God will bless us"?

One word of warning, and we have done. Suppose the Lord should bless "us" in the plural, and not "you," dear hearer, in the singular! What if there should be showers of mercy, but they should not drop on you? What if He should bestow a token for good upon His people, but you should be left out? It may be so, for it has been so—and if such is the dreary fact, it will make you worse instead of better, for none is so dry as the

fleece which remains dry when the floor is wet: none is so lost as those who are lost where others are saved. Tremble lest that should be your case! Yet it need not be so; oh, blessed be God, I hope I can say it shall not be so! "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near." He has abundant pardons to bestow, and He will give them freely to all who ask. All He asks of you is that you trust His Son, and this faith His Holy Spirit *gives*. Do trust Him! Rest upon the merit of His precious blood, and you will not be left out when He dispenses His favors, but you shall sing as cheerfully as all the rest, "God, even our own God, shall bless us. God *shall* bless us."

820 WORKING OUT WHAT IS WORKED IN – PHIL. 2:12-13

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, July 12th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." — Philippians 2:12-13

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Philippians 2]

I HAVE FREQUENTLY heard these words addressed to an indiscriminate audience, and it has always struck me that they have thereby been twisted from their right meaning. These words, as they stand in the New Testament, contain no exhortation to all men, but are directed to the people of God. They are not intended as an exhortation to the unconverted; they are, as we find them in the epistle, beyond all question addressed to those who are already saved through a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. No proof can be needed of this assertion, for the whole epistle is directed to the saints. It begins, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons"; and the verse before us contains within itself conclusive evidence that Paul was not speaking to unbelievers, for he calls the persons addressed, "my beloved," and he says of them, "As you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence." He was,

therefore, writing to persons who had been obedient to the gospel, and all true obedience springs from *saving faith*—he was therefore addressing those who through faith in Christ, had been rendered obedient to the gospel commands. To obedient believers he writes, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." It may be right to use a text apart from the context, and I will not venture to censure those who have dealt so with this passage, but it is never right to attempt to draw authoritative doctrine from a text apart from the context, and therefore nothing can be drawn from the text before us in reference to the duty or to the power of the unconverted, seeing that from its context it is tied and bound to those who are believers in Christ Jesus, and to those who were and still continue to be obedient to the gospel which Paul proclaimed. If we sometimes looked a little more to the context of sentences, we should be kept from very dangerous errors. The Bible ought to be treated in conformity with common sense, as you would use any other book. If you took the writings of any author, however carefully he might express himself, if you picked out a sentence here, and a sentence there, you might make the man say what he never believed; no, even make him to be the supporter of opinions which he abhors! So it is with the Bible—if you pay no regard to the connection and general run of the passage, you miss the mind of the Spirit of God, and thrust your own mind into God's words rather than bring out God's mind from the words of the Holy Spirit. The exhortation before us is given solely to the people of God, and I feel it to be more than my conscience could endure to force it into any other service. To as many as are obedient to the gospel, the word of the Holy Spirit comes this morning, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you."

In a certain sense, the salvation of every person who believes in Christ is complete, and complete without any working out on his part, seeing that "it is finished," and we are complete in Jesus. Observe that there are two parts of our salvation; the one complete, the other as yet incomplete—though guaranteed to be brought to perfection. The first part of our salvation consists of a work *for us;* the second, of a work *in us*. The work for us is perfect—none can add to it. Jesus Christ our Lord has offered a complete atonement for all the offenses of His people; He took His people into union with Himself, and by that union they became entitled to all the merit of His righteousness; they became partakers of His everlasting life, and inheritors of His glory. Saints are therefore saved completely as far as substitutionary work is concerned. Such was the meaning of those majestic death-words of our Lord, "It is finished!" He had finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Thus He perfected forever them who are set apart. Now with the work of Christ we cannot intermeddle; we are never told to work that out, but to receive it by faith. The blessing comes "to him who works not, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly." Justification is not at all by human effort, but by the free gift of God. The second part of salvation consists of a work *in us*—this is the operation of God the Holy Spirit. As many as were redeemed by the blood of Jesus, are also in due time renewed in the spirit of their minds. The Holy Spirit, in regeneration, descends *into* a man and creates in him a new nature. He does not destroy the old that remains still to be battled with, and to be overcome. Though the nature which the Spirit implants is perfect in its kind and in its degree, yet it is not perfect in its development. It is a seed which needs to work itself out into a tree; it is an infant which requires growing into the stature of a perfect man. The new nature has in it all the elements of entire

perfection, but it needs to be expanded, brought out, to use the words of the text, worked out with fear and trembling. God, having first worked it in, it becomes the business of the Christian life to work out the secret inner principle till it permeates the entire system, till it overcomes the old nature, till it in fact utterly destroys inbred corruption, and reigns supreme in the man's every part—as it shall do when the Lord takes us to dwell with Himself forever. Understand then, it is not at all to the mediatorial work of Christ, it is not at all with regard to the pardon of our sins, or the justification of our persons that Paul speaks, but only with regard to our inner Spiritual life. He says of that, "Work it out with fear and trembling, for it is God that works in you."

This morning I am sure I shall have your attention while I shall note first, *the matter to be worked out;* secondly, *the model to be worked to;* thirdly, *the spirit in which we are to work;* and fourthly, *the great encouragement which is suggested in the text for such working.*

I. THE MATTER TO BE WORKED OUT is spoken of in the text as "your own salvation."

Every Christian is to be a worker for the good and salvation of others. It is very doubtful whether a man knows the Lord unless he desires to extend the boundaries of the Master's kingdom; but on no account is any Christian to think that he can safely neglect the interests of his own soul. "Work out *your own* salvation." Your charity must begin at home. You ought to seek the spread of the truth of God, but you must first know the truth yourself, and you must daily seek to understand it better; you are bound to attempt the reclaiming of the wandering, but you must take heed lest you yourself wander, for however unselfish you may become—and God grant that you may have much unselfishness, yet still it is a law of nature, and equally a law of divine grace, that you should see to self-preservation; indeed, if you neglect this, you will become utterly

unable to do anything for the salvation of other people. "Work out *your own* salvation." Plowing another man's field, do not allow your own to lie fallow; indicating to another the mote in his eye, do not permit a beam to blind yourself. You preach against the sluggard, let not the thorn and the thistle grow in your own garden. You testify of the medicine which Christ give, but physician, see to it that you are yourself healed. The first business of a Christian should be to see that all his own graces are in a vigorous condition, that repentance always weeps for sin, that Faith always looks to the cross, that patience becomes stronger to bear her cross, that hope's eyes are clear to behold the coming glory, that to faith we add courage, and to courage patience, and to patience brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. We are never to sit down and fold our arms, and say, "My lifework is over; I am saved; I have no pilgrimage to make to the celestial city; I wage no war for driving out the Canaanites." O beloved, the time of rest will come on the other side of the Jordan, but as yet it is for you to press forward like the racer whose prize is not yet won, and to watch like a warrior whose conflict is not ended. Your own salvation is your first concern!

The text speaks of *working out* "your own salvation." Now, the matter to be worked out is a something which the text tells us is at the same time worked in. We may safely defy anybody to work a thing out which is not first in. God, we are told in the second verse of our text, works in us, therefore it is that we are to work the inward towards the outward. We work out, bring out, educe from within ourselves to our exterior life, that which God constantly works in us in the interior secret recesses of our spiritual being. An unconverted man cannot work any good thing out, for there is nothing worked in; if he works out that which is within, apart from what God has worked in him, he will naturally work out that which is of his own nature or of

the devil—strife, envy, murder, and I know not what. Work out the human heart, work out what nature has worked in, what the devil has worked in, and you work out the hideous criminal, or else the proud and self-righteous Pharisee; but, believer, there are better principles in you, and you are to see to the education—perhaps that is the word—to the working out from within your own soul that which God has worked in you. You have faith, work it out then, act like a believer and trust God in daily life. You possess the incorruptible seed—bring it out then, let your whole conduct be incorruptibly pure and heavenly. You profess that the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and He does so if you are a Christian; well, then, let your whole conduct be saturated with the sacred influence; let it be yours to lead the heavenly life of one in whom dwells the Lord from heaven. Be you Christ-like, inasmuch as the Spirit of Christ dwells in you. This is the matter to be attended to then, the bringing out, the working out, and developing the mine of divine grace which God has worked in us.

"Your own *salvation,"* the text says, and that is correct enough. Holiness is salvation. We are not to work out our salvation from the *guilt* of sin—that has been done by Christ. We have now to work out our salvation from the *power* of sin. God has in effect worked that in us—He has broken the yoke of sin in our hearts; it lives, and struggles, and contends, but it is dethroned, and our life is to be the continual overthrow and dethronement of sin in our members. A man may be saved from the guilt of sin, and yet at present he may not be altogether saved from the power of pride; for instance, a saved man may be defiled by being purse-proud, or proud of his position, or of his talents; now the believer must, with fear and trembling, work out his salvation from that most intolerable evil. A man may be the subject of a quick and hasty disposition, he may be often angry without a cause; my brother, your salvation from

sin is not *complete* until you are saved from a bad temper! Day by day, with solemn resolution, you should work out your salvation from that. I might take any form of besetting sin, or any one of the temptations which come from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in each case bid you labor for salvation from its bondage. Our business is to be continually fighting for liberty from sin, contending earnestly, that we may not wear the shackles of any infirmity, that we may not be the bond-slaves in any shape or form of the works of the devil. We need to be working out by vehement efforts after holiness, to be working out our entire deliverance from sin that dwells in us, and from sin that contends without us; this, I believe, is to be the great business of the Christian's life. I have heard it said that the good sculptor, whenever he sees a suitable block of marble, firmly believes that there is a statue concealed within it, and that his business is but to take away the superfluous material, and so unveil the "thing of beauty" which shall be "a joy forever." Believer, you are that block of marble! You have been quarried by divine grace, and set apart for the Master's service, but we cannot see the image of Christ in you yet as we would wish; true, there are some traces of it, some dim outlines of what it is to be; it is for you, with the chisel and the mallet, with constant endeavor and holy dependence upon God, to work out that image of Christ in yourself, till you shall be discovered to be by all men like your Lord and Master! God has sketched the image of His Son in you; in the slightly carved marble He has fairly outlined it, and you have but to go on chipping away those sins, infirmities, and corruptions till the fair likeness of the incarnate God shall be seen by all. You are this day, Christian, like the seed of Israel in Canaan. You have not to escape from Egypt; you are already free. With a high hand and with an outstretched arm God has set you free from the Pharaoh of your sin; you have already passed through the

wilderness of your convictions—the fiery serpents and howling wilderness are all over now; you have crossed the river, and by His grace you are a saved man! Jesus is the Joshua in command; He reigns and rules in your spirit; you have not to fight your way towards the land—you are in it—for we who have believed do enter into rest. So what have you to do now? Why, you have to extend the kingdom within yourself by routing one nation of sins after another; you have, in the power of the Spirit, to hang up your corruptions before the light of the sun—to destroy them utterly, and let not one escape; for Canaan will never be a place of rest to you till you have driven away the Canaanites, and live in the land without association with sin. This is the matter then to which you are earnestly invited to attend. May the Holy Spirit grant you grace never to forget it as long as you live.

II. Secondly, what is **THE MODEL TO BE WORKED TO**?

Every artist requires some pattern or idea in his mind to which he is to work. I must beg to refer you to the chapter itself. Taking the text according to its context, Paul has been urging the people here addressed to be "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"; in which four expressions we have the same idea. Paul would have all God's people to be unanimous; he would have them *think* alike—that is the precise interpretation of the Greek—he would have them hold the same views, receive the same truth, contend for the same faith. He would have them as much alike in heart as in head. They are to be all found in the same love, not some loving the rest, but each loving *all*, and not even a single person exempted; every soul flaming with the sacred fire. He would have them knit together in every sacred enterprise, being of one accord, or as the Greek has it, of one soul—as though instead of a hundred souls enshrined in a hundred persons, they had but one soul incarnate in a hundred bodies. He would have all

the people of God to be fused into one race, made to love each other, in fact, fervently with a pure heart. Now by this may we tell whether we are becoming like our Lord. What is our standing today towards our fellow Christians? If there are strifes and divisions among you, you are carnal and walk as men. Where do divisions come from? Come they not from fleshly passions? Brothers and sisters, if you cannot work with your fellow believers; if you cannot feel a love towards your fellow members—you may, perhaps, feel justified in keeping aloof from them, and speaking after the manner of men and before men, your justification may be a good one—but, rest assured, were you fully developed in the divine life, you would have enough patience to bear with the infirmity of a brother, and to overlook his errors; you would also have enough divine grace to overcome your own infirmities, which may, after all, be the real cause of the division. Brothers and sisters, when we set up different opinions, one of us must be wrong, therefore we are not complete in knowledge. When we set up different policies in a church, we cannot all be equally wise; therefore, some of us need to be better led of the Spirit of God. But, oh, when a church marches like the old Roman legion, every man keeping step, and each warrior inspired as with one soul when he saw the eagle brought to the front, and followed it to victory or death, then the church has life and vigor, and only then. I thank God we have had much of this for many years, and I rejoice in it, but we still need more. There are some hard pieces of metal among us which have not been melted, and, therefore, are not essentially one with the general mass; and I pray God, if at any time we shall begin to be separated in heart from one another, the eternal Spirit would put us in the fire again, and melt us down and cast us in the same mold—and may God send the like unity to all Christian churches.

Melanchthon mourned in his day the divisions among Protestants, and sought to bring the Protestants together by a parable of the war between the wolves and the dogs. The wolves were somewhat afraid, for the dogs were many and strong, and therefore they sent out a spy to observe them. On his return, the scout said, "It is true the dogs are many, but there are not many leaders among them. There are dogs of so many sorts one can hardly count them; and as for the most of them," said he, "they are little dogs, which bark loudly, but cannot bite. However, this did not cheer me as much," said the wolf, "as this, that as they came marching on, I observed they were all snapping right and left at one another, and I could see clearly that though they all hate the wolf, yet each dog hates every other dog with all his heart." I fear it is true still, for there are many professors who snap right and left, followers of Jesus too, when they had better save their teeth for the wolves! If our enemies are to be put to confusion, it must be by the united efforts of all the people of God—unity is strength. The Lord sends purity and unity to Zion, and then woe be to your gates, O Philistia! The standard of Judah's Lion shall lead the way to certain victory when the divisions of Reuben are healed, and Ephraim ceases to envy her sister. Heal our divisions, O Lord, so we shall tread down our adversaries in Your strength!

The next verse gives us another rule for guidance in our sacred statuary, as I shall call it—it is *humiliation*. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." Speak of great works that have been achieved by engineers, bridges cast over ravines, mountains bored—here is a work far more tremendous and which no man might venture to attempt, if it were not for the encouragement that God has already worked it in him. Nothing is to be done through strife. But how much of religious service is from top to bottom carried out in strife?

Sometimes one sect will seek to increase itself merely for the sake of becoming larger and more influential than another. Do Sunday school teachers never try to get good classes and to obtain conversions that they may be more honored than others? Does that ever enter the classroom? Do street preachers ever wish to preach better than others, and only in order that they may win more applause? I know this from experience that the spirit of strife may easily enough come into the pulpit, and that the minister may be seeking to outrun his neighbor when he thinks he is filled with zeal for God. The devil has had a finger in the building of many places of worship; the people have strived with one another, and then they have separated and built a new chapel, fancying that it has been all for the glory of God. Meanwhile, the devil has felt that it has been for *his* glory, and he has rejoiced therein. Whenever I serve God out of any motive of emulation or strife, I prove to myself that I have not worked out my salvation, from at least one evil passion, and I have need to fear and tremble—to begin again, and labor diligently till the spirit of pride shall be driven out of my soul. "Let nothing," again, "be done out of vainglory." But how much is done out of vainglory? How many people dress themselves out of vainglory? The thought is uppermost, "How do I look in this?" How many give to God's cause out of vainglory that they may seem to be generous? How often does a preacher polish his sentences, and pick his words, that he may be thought to be an able orator and an eloquent preacher? Vainglory! It is a wonder that God accepts us in any of our works at all; in fact He never could if He did not see them washed in the precious blood of Jesus, for in almost everything, from the lowest member up to the most useful minister of Christ, this vainglory will thrust itself in. Ah, brothers and sisters, you must work out your own salvation from this spirit of vainglory, and do it with fear and trembling, God helping

you. It is unworthy of you to be vainglorious; it is dishonorable to God; you must be brought down from it. The divine arm will aid you in the struggle, and I beseech you, as you have obeyed full many a gospel precept from our lips, so be obedient now, and strive against all vainglory! Whenever I have noticed it (and I have noticed it among you) I have been greatly pained, and pained because I may have set the example myself; too often workers are disposed to magnify their own labors, and think lightly of the work of others; it is remarked that such an institution is flourishing, but somebody says at once, "Yes, yes, there are many conversions, but I wonder whether they will all last?" It is a miserable vice of workers to depreciate the work of other workers—it is quite melancholy to see it in the best of people, and I see it everywhere. People will, if they can, pull other people's work down in order to make their own work appear to be rising rapidly; this vainglory is all wrong! It shows to all that we are not yet conformed to the image of that great model of perfection, Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our own profession.

Next, the apostle says, "In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." Alas, how far we fall below this standard! How few have attained this divine grace! Bunyan beautifully portrays Christiana and Mercy coming up out of the interpreter's house; they have had jewels put upon them, and when they are both washed, Mercy says to Christiana, "How comely and beautiful you look!" "No," Christiana said, "My sister, I see no beauty in myself, but how lovely *you* look; I think I never saw such loveliness!" They were both lovely because they could see other people's loveliness. Your own spiritual beauty may be very much measured by what you can see in other people; when you say, "Ah, there are no saints now," it is to be feared that *you* are not one; when you complain that love is dead in the Christian church, it must be dead in *your*

heart, or you would not say so. As you think of others, *that* you are. Out of your own mouth shall you be condemned. Your corn shall be measured with your own bushel. When we come to admire the good in other people that we have not yet attained ourselves, instead of depreciating other people because they have not something which we have, when we get to that, we shall be evidently approaching nearer to Christ. If the popular preacher can say, "My beloved brother A has a smaller congregation, and is not a very attractive preacher, yet he visits his flock so carefully, and looks after each individual so well, that I admire him greatly, and must endeavor to imitate him"; and if the man with the small congregation says, "My brother B studies to find out acceptable words, and commend himself to the people of God, and he is very earnest, and is a great soul-winner. I wish I were as earnest; I admire it in him." Why, these interchanges of loving estimate are infinitely more Christ-like than for the minister with the large congregation to say, "brother A has mistaken his calling; he cannot get above a hundred people to hear him: what is the good of his preaching?" And for the lesser light to reply spitefully, "Ah, B's work is just a flash in the pan—fine words and excitement, there's nothing in it." *Satan* greatly approves of our railing at each other, but God does not! Let us learn this morning to esteem others instead of depreciating them—for in proportion as we exhibit a meek and lowly spirit, we shall be working out our own salvation.

The apostle lingers for one moment more to inculcate as a part of the salvation worked out, the development of the spirit of mutual love and charity. "Look not every man on his own interests, but every man also on the interests of others." In temporal matters do not think it to be enough if your own business prospers—have a desire to see your brethren obtaining a sufficiency; do not be so greedy as to scrape

everything to your own dish, but let other men have some share in your concerns. If they are poor and you wealthy, help them. If they are in straits and you possess abundance, minister to their necessities. Let not Christ be naked and you able but unwilling to clothe Him. Let not Christ be sick and you visit Him not. But if one member suffers, you do, as another member, suffer with him. In spiritual things think it not enough yourself to live near to God—take the cases of others who may have backslidden, and lay them before the throne of grace, and seek by loving rebuke or gentle admonition, to restore such as are fallen, remembering yourself, lest you also be tempted. Be anxious for the good of all the members of the church to which you belong; in fact, as far as you can, seek the soul prosperity of all the people of God. Observe then, my brothers and sisters, the drift of the apostle is this—if we are to work out our own salvation, it must be by putting self down in the dust and becoming unselfish! In proportion as we are selfish we are sold under sin, but in proportion as we are unselfish and live for others for Christ's sake, in proportion as we value others and set a low estimate upon ourselves—in that proportion we are advancing in divine grace, and are working out our own salvation from sin. As I said before, here is the work, here is the difficulty. The descent into the crater of sin is easy enough. How many slide into sin as swiftly as travelers sliding down the snowy side of an Alp! But to toil upward, to climb the hill of God—this is the work, this is the difficulty. Blessed is that man who, leaning on the eternal arm, works out his own salvation, and is permitted to ascend the hill of the Lord, and stand in His holy place.

Before the apostle had done with his subject, he set before the Philippians the best model in the world. Read the next verse and see after what image we are to be fashioned. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the

form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." There is your model! Jesus stoops from Godhead to manhood, from the throne above the cherubim to the manger, side by side with the cattle! Stoop, my brother, if you would rise! If you would be great, be little! If you would be high, be low! If you would be exalted, condescend! Yes, and be like the Master was, for you never can be perfect without it; willing even to give up life itself if it is for God's glory; for renouncing His reputation, and being numbered with the transgressors, and crucified with malefactors, He then gave up His life to death—death in its most shameful and painful shape, the death of the cross! We shall not have thoroughly worked out our salvation from the bondage of this fleshly body till we are willing to give up reputation and honor; if we may but serve Christ, and are willing to put our neck upon the block, our property to shipwreck, and to give all up for Him, if so He wills it, *then* we shall have thoroughly worked out our salvation! But this is hard work! The roots of our selfishness go very deep. The deadly cancer of self-love has thrust its horrible roots into our souls, intertwisting them with the vital fibers of our heart. I suppose when the last root of pride is torn away, we shall ascend to be with God. Until we are wrapped up in our death clothes, we shall never have completely worked out our own salvation. The battle ends only with life, but we shall earn the victory, by God's grace, for His power within us shall help us to bring ourselves down to that heavenly nothingness in which God is all in all. Only then shall we master our members, subdue our inclinations, conquer our lofty thoughts, lay low our pride, and then, then will God also highly exalt us, as He has His dear Son,

then shall we partake in the honor which belongs to Him, and reign with Him forever and ever. Seeing that we are humbled with Him, and willing to die with Him, we shall be exalted with Him, and made to live with Him world without end! I have thus brought before you the model to which we are to work, as well as the matter which we are to work out.

III. We have in the third place in the text **THE SPIRIT IN WHICH THIS MATTER IS TO BE WORKED OUT**.

First it is to be an *energetic* spirit. *"Work* out." From the Greek word for "work" we get our English word "energy." The bringing out of the new nature into actual exposition in our life is a work of superlative difficulty. Some professors appear to have imbibed the notion that the grace of God is a kind of opium with which men may drug themselves into slumber, and their passion for strong doses of sleepy doctrine grows with that which it feeds on. "God works in us," they say, "therefore there is nothing for us to do." Bad reasoning! False conclusion! God works, says the text; therefore *we* must work out because God works in. The assistance of divine grace is not given to us to put aside our own efforts, but to excite them. God comes to us to work in us—what? To work in us to be indifferent? Ah, no, to work in us to will with resolution and firmness! Does He work in us, having willed, to sit still? Ah, no, He works in us to do. The direct effect of the Influence of grace upon the heart is to make a man *active*—and the more divine grace he has, the more energetic he becomes! A man will never overcome sin except by energy; you cannot get your pride down I am sure by merely resolving to do it—you will have to watch that old enemy, and keep your eye on him as a detective watches a thief, for when you think, "At last I have really overcome him," you will discover him at work under another shape, and your conflict will commence anew. And so with a hot temper; how some brothers and sisters have had to struggle with it, and

when they have thought, "Now I really have mastered it by the grace of God," then something has occurred in which the temptation has assailed them from another corner, and the old man has set the tongue on fire again. Yes, our life must be spent in constant watching, and, as we find ourselves tripping, we must add constant repentance, perpetually praying to be upheld for the future, unceasingly struggling to attain something yet beyond, pressing forward evermore. Evermore, I say, for to pause is to retreat, to stop is to be driven back.

The text further says, work out your own salvation "with fear." What kind of fear is that? If you read a Romish author, he will tell you, "this is the fear of 'purgatory,' or the fear of hell"; and if you go to an Arminian author, he will assure you that it is the fear of falling from grace, and being ultimately lost. I do not believe that *this* fear is ever necessary to a child of God at all. This is the fear that genders to bondage. If I am sure that I believe in Jesus, I am no more afraid of being lost than I am afraid that God Himself should die, because we have Christ's word for it: "I give unto My sheep *eternal life,* and they shall *never* perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." You do not suppose that Paul, who knew that fear "has torment," and is cast out by perfect love, would tell us to work out our salvation under so disheartening an influence, do you?! The fear of the text is that which makes a fear to offend so good a God—a hallowed, childlike fear, of which we read, "Blessed is the man who fears always." A reverential awe of the Most High; a pious dread of offending—this is the fear which is to be cultivated by us. It is not the fear which is the enemy of full assurance, but it is the fear which is opposed to carnal security or recklessness.

But the "trembling"—what is that? Is that the slave's trembling? No, this belongs not to heirs of divine grace—they have a trembling which is akin to *joy*, for they "rejoice with

trembling." Before the Lord we do not tremble with fright, but we are moved even to quaking with a holy awe! Under a sense of the presence of God we tremble lest we should sin, we tremble lest that presence should leave, lest we should grieve the Spirit and vex the Holy One of Israel. We know what it is to tremble with the exceeding joy and glory of the love of God shed abroad in our souls by the Holy Spirit. Strangers do not understand us, but men of God will. George Fox was called a Quaker most probably because his whole frame seemed to shiver under the consciousness of the divine power. We know what it is to contend with sin under a divine impulse, and to be filled with tremulous anxiety while wrestling with our foe. Sin is to be trembled at, and God also, so that there is a double cause for a solemn awe in the business of the soul's inner life. It is no child's play, but an awful weighty business. I pray God we may know more of holy trembling—that the awful majesty of divine love may be so revealed to us that we may lie prostrate beneath its force, wondering how it is that we are permitted to stand in the midst of such a blaze of love, a bush burning but unconsumed. "Even our God is a consuming fire." Many learn by that text that the Lord, out of Christ, is a consuming fire to the wicked, and so indeed He is, but the passage means far more. The Lord is a consuming fire to us. "Who may abide the day of His coming? For He shall be as a refiner's fire!" He will consume in us all that can be consumed. His nature in us cannot be consumed, but all of earth and evil will be. What trembling may well seize us as we think of this! Only that which is Himself in us will come forth out of the furnace; that will live and flourish in the very heat of the fire, but all else must go. Every sacrifice must be salted with fire—this is sharp discipline, and well may we tremble at it.

IV. Lastly, without detaining you much longer, let us notice **THE SWEET ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH THE TEXT AFFORDS**.

We are to work out our salvation for this reason—"It is God which works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure." Here is help in an exercise beyond your power; here is help all-sufficient for every emergency; here is help which it ennobles you to receive, divine help, help which, if Satan shall put on his utmost force, and if your corruptions shall arrive at their utmost power, shall yet be more than equal to the day. All-sufficient grace dwells in you, believer! There is a living well springing up within you; use the bucket, then; keep on drawing; you will never exhaust it; there is a living source within. Continue to struggle; you will not exhaust the life-force which God has placed within you. There is a growing mine of gold; spend it; keep on scattering right and left. Inexhaustible, divine wealth is yours, therefore cease not to work it out. Observe what God works in us, He works in us *to will*—the desire after holiness, the resolution to put down sin, the pang of grief because we have sinned, the stern resolve that we will not fall into that sin again—all, all is of God; and He who gave the desire will surely fulfill it.

But He that gave you the will does not leave you there; He works in you the divine power *to do*. The power to achieve the victory, the power to smite down the loftiest plume of pride shall come from Him. God is equal to all emergencies, therefore fear not; though your inner life shall be subject to 10,000 dangers, He will give you power to do the right, the just, the lovely and the true; for He works gloriously in you.

That which He works in you is pleasing in His sight. Note the words, *"according to His good pleasure."* It gives God pleasure to see you holy! It is His delight to see you self-denying. If you conquer yourself it will give Him pleasure. Depend upon it then,

since He is pleased with the result, and has put forth His own strong hand to bring it about, and you, as you work, will not work at a *perhaps*, but in absolute certainty of success. O brothers and sisters, my heart glows with the hope of being altogether rid of the power of sin! Oh, what a day that shall be when neither sin nor Satan shall vex the pleasures of our purified spirits! What bliss will it be to see God face to face, because the un-godlike and unheavenly have been altogether cast out of us! O long expected day, begin! The best heaven I could wish would be perfectly to be rid of myself, perfectly to be free from tendencies to evil! Is not this the heaven you are panting after? If it is, you shall have it. If you have grace enough to pine after it, grace enough to labor for it, you shall yet have grace enough to win it!

I have thus addressed God's people, and I leave the matter with them. I wish I could have addressed you all as believers, but, alas, you rebel against the Lord! You will not come to Christ, you will not trust in Jesus; yet, to you unbelievers I have a message; it is but a sentence, and I have done—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." You have nothing to do with working yet. *Believe* first, and when you have believed, then set to work. But, now, the first gospel message to you is this, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved"; then its awful alternative, "He who believes not shall be damned." God save you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

821 HOPE IN HOPELESS CASES – MATT. 17:17

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, July 19th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Bring him here to Me." — Matthew 17:17

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Mark 9:1-29]

OUR REAL TEXT will be the entire narrative, but as it seems necessary to select some one sentence, we have chosen that before us as the true hinge of the story.

The kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, while on earth, was so extensive as to touch the confines both of heaven and hell. We see Him at one moment discoursing with Moses and Elijah in His glory, as though at heaven's gates, and lo, in a few hours we see Him confronting a foul spirit, as though defying the infernal pit of hell. There is a long journey from patriarchs to demons, from prophets to dumb devils; yet mercy prompts Him and power supports Him, so that He is equally glorious in either place. What a glorious Lord He was even while in His humiliation! How glorious is He now! How far His goodness reaches! Truly He has dominion from sea to sea; to the extremes of human condition His Empire reaches. Our Lord and Master hears with joy the shout of a believer who has vanquished his foe, and, at the same hour, He bows His ear to the despairing wail of a sinner who has given up all confidence in self, and is desirous to be saved by Him. At one moment He

is accepting the crown which the warrior brings Him from the well-fought fight; at another moment He is healing the broken in heart, and binding up their wounds. There is a notable difference between the dying scene of the triumphant believer as he enters into rest, and the first weeping repentance of a Saul of Tarsus as he seeks mercy of the Savior whom he has persecuted; and yet the Lord's heart and eyes are with both. Our Lord's transfiguration did not disqualify Him for casting out devils, nor did it make Him feel too sublime and spiritual to grapple with human ills, and so, at this hour, the glories of heaven do not take Him off from the miseries of earth, nor do they make Him forget the cries and tears of the feeble ones who are seeking Him in this valley of tears.

The case of the deaf and dumb demoniac, which we read in your hearing, and to which I call your particular attention this morning, is a very remarkable one. All sin is the evidence that the soul is under the dominion of Satan. All unconverted persons are really possessed by the devil in a certain sense; Satan has established his throne within their hearts, and there he reigns and rules the members of their body. "The spirit, which now works in the children of disobedience" is the name which Paul gives to the prince of darkness, but these possessions are not alike in every case—and the casting out of Satan, though always effected by the same Lord, is not always worked after the same fashion. We bless God, many of us, that when *we* lived in sin, we were not given over to a furious delirium of it—there was method in our madness. We claim no credit for this, but we do thank God for it, that we were not whirled along like rolling things before the tempest, but were restrained and kept within the bounds of outward propriety. We are also grateful that when, being awakened and alarmed, we fell under the iron rod of Satan, we were not all brought into that utter despair; that horror of great darkness, that

inward torment and agony, which some are made to endure. We are grateful that when Jesus came to save us, although we were much hindered by Satan, yet there was none of the foaming of pride, and wallowing of obstinate lust; the tearing of raging desperation of which we have read in memorable instances, but the Lord opened our hearts *gently* with His golden key, entered into the chamber of our spirits, and took possession. For the most part, the conquests which Jesus achieves in the souls of His people, though worked by the same power, are more quietly accomplished than in the case before us. For this let thanks be rendered to the God of grace. Yet every now and then there are these strange, out-of-the-way cases, persons in whom Satan seems to run riot, and to exert the utmost force of his malice, and in whom the Lord Jesus displays the exceeding greatness of His power, when in almighty love He dethrones the tyrant and casts him out, never to return again. If there should be only one such person here this morning, I shall be justified in looking after him, for what man is there among you, who, having a hundred sheep, if one of them should go astray, does not leave the 99 in the wilderness, and go after that which is gone astray? I ask the prayers of such as have, in years gone by, been brought to Jesus, and are now rejoicing in Him, that we may, this morning, find out the far-off wanderers, and may, by the Holy Spirit's anointing, liberate those who are bound with fetters of iron, that they may become, today, the Lord's freed ones, for if the Son shall make them free, they shall be free indeed!

I shall, by my Lord's help, first enlarge upon the *deplorable case;* then we shall meditate upon the *one resource;* and then we will conclude by admiring the *sure result.*

I. First, let us look, as far as time permits, into the details of the **DEPLORABLE CASE** before us.

We understand the physical miracles of Christ to be types of His *spiritual* works. The wonders which He worked in the natural world have their analogies in the spiritual world—the outward and natural is the symbol of the *inward* and *spiritual*. Now the demoniac who was brought by his father for healing, is not so distinctly representative of a case of gross sin, though the spirit is called a foul one, and Satan is everywhere defiling, but it is an instance of the great horror, disturbance of mind, and raving despair caused by the evil one in some minds to their torment and jeopardy. You will observe concerning it, that *the disease appeared even now and then in overwhelming attacks of mania, in which the man was utterly beyond his own control.* The epileptic fit threw the poor victim in all directions. So have we seen melancholy persons in whom despondency, mistrust, numbing despair, have raged at times with unconquerable fury; they have not so much entertained these evil guests as been victims to them. As Mark puts it, "The spirit takes him." So have such forlorn ones been captured and carried off by Giant Despair. The fairies have scourged them onward over dry places, seeking rest and finding none; they have refused to be comforted, and like sick men, their souls abhor all manner of meat; they displayed no power to struggle with their melancholy—resistance did not suggest itself to them; they were taken off their feet, and carried clean out of themselves in a rapture of woe. Such cases are not at all uncommon. Satan, knowing that his time is short, and perceiving that Jesus is hastening to the rescue, lashes his poor slave with excess of malice, as if by any means he may utterly destroy his victim before the deliverer arrives.

The poor patient before us was filled at times with *a terrible anguish,* an anguish which he expressed by foaming at the mouth, by wallowing upon the ground, and by crying out. At times in his dreadful falls he bruised himself, and his delirium

led him to dash himself against anything which stood before him, so causing to himself new injuries. None can tell but those who have felt the same, what are the pains of conviction of sin when aggravated by the suggestions of the enemy. Some of us have passed through this in our measure, and can declare that it is hell upon earth; we have felt the weight of the hand of an angry God; we know what it is to read the Bible, and not find a single promise in it that would suit our case, but rather to see every page of it glowing with threats, as though curses like lightning blazed from it. Even the choicest passages have appeared to rise up against us as though they said, "Intrude not here; these comforts are not for you; you have nothing to do with such things as these!" We have bruised ourselves against doctrines, and precepts, and promises, and even the cross itself; we have prayed, and our very prayer has increased our misery! Even against the mercy seat we have fallen, judging our prayers to be but babbling sounds obnoxious to the Lord. We have gone up with the assembly of God's people, and the preacher seemed to frown upon us, and to rub salt into our wounds, and aggravate our case; even the reading, and the hymns, and the prayers appeared to be in league against us; and we went home to our retirement more desponding than before. I hope none of you are passing through such a state of mind as this, for it is, of all things, next to hell itself, one of the most dreadful. In such a plight men have cried out with Job, "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me? When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions: so that my soul chooses strangling, and death rather than life. I loathe it; I would not live always: let me alone, for my days are vanity." Thanks be unto God, the issues out of this slavery are often

such as make angels sing for joy, but while the black night endures, it is a horror of darkness indeed. Put a martyr upon the rack, or even fasten him with an iron chain to the stake, and let the flames kindle about him and if his Lord shall smile upon him, his anguish will be nothing compared with the torture of a spirit scorched and burned with an inward sense of the wrath of God. Such a man can join in the lament of Jeremiah, and cry, "He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out: He has made my chain heavy. Also, when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer... He has bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to enter into my heart…He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drunk with wormwood." The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but who can bear a wounded spirit? To groan over unforgiven sin, to dread its well-deserved punishment, to fear the everlasting burnings, these are things which make men suffer with an emphasis, and make them think life is a burden.

We learn from the narrative that the evil spirit at the times when it took full possession of the man, *sought his destruction* by hurling him in different directions. "Sometimes it casts him into the fire, and sometimes into the water." So is it with deeply distressed souls. One day they seem to be all on fire with earnestness and zeal, with impatience and anxiety, but the next day they sink into a horrible coldness and apathy of soul from which it appears to be utterly impossible to awaken them. All sensitive yesterday, all insensible today! They are uncertain; you know not where to find them; if you deal with them as for a spirit that is in danger from the fire of *insolence*, you have lost your pains, for in the next few minutes they will be in danger from the water of *indifference!* They fly to extremes. They are like the souls fabled to be in "purgatory," of whom legends say that they suffer by turns in an oven, and in cells of ice. You would

suppose from the way in which they speak today, that they felt themselves to be the blackest of sinners, but in a short time they deny that they feel any sort of repentance for sin. You would imagine, to hear them talk at one time, that they would never cease to pray till they found the Savior, but by-and-by they tell you that they cannot pray at all, and that it is but a mockery for them to bend the knee. They ring all the changes; they are more fickle than the weather; their color comes and goes like that of the chameleon; they are all fits and starts, convulsions and contortions. He were more than human who could put up with them for a month, for they vary more often than the moon! Their malady laughs us to scorn, their trouble baffles all our consoling efforts. Only Jesus Christ Himself can deal with them! It is well that we can add that He has a peculiar art in dealing with desperate diseases, and finds His delight in healing those whom all others have left for lost.

To add to the difficulties of this deplorable case, this child was *deaf*, so our Lord tells us in Mark, "Come out of him, you deaf and dumb spirit." There was therefore no way of reasoning with him at all; not a sound could pass through that sealed ear. With other men you might speak, and a soft word might calm the perturbations of their mind, but no word, however gentle, could reach this poor tormented spirit, impervious to sound and sense alike. And are there not such still, to whom words are wasted breath? You may quote promises of God; you may supply encouragements; you may explain doctrines, but it is all nothing; they end where they began. Like squirrels in revolving cages, they never go anywhere! Oh, the twists and turns, the convolutions and, the windings of poor tormented minds! It is easy enough certainly to tell them to believe in Jesus, but if they understand you, it is in such a dark manner that you had need to explain again, and that explanation you will have to explain still further. To cast

themselves simply upon the blood of sprinkling, and to rest upon the finished work of Jesus is, of all things most plain, the very child's A B C cannot be plainer, and yet for all that it is not plain to them; they will appear to comprehend you, and then start aside at a tangent; they will appear to be convinced, and for a time to give up their doubts and fears, but meet them half-an-hour afterwards, and you will find you have been speaking to a wall, addressing yourself to the deaf. Oh, lamentable case! The Lord of mercy look on such, for hopeless is *man's* help. Glory be to God, He has laid help upon one who is mighty, who can make the deaf to hear, causing His voice to ring with sweet encouragements in the death-like stillness of the dungeons of despair!

Next to this it appears that the afflicted one was *dumb*, that is to say, incapable of articulate speech by reason of the demon possession; since he cried out when the devil left him, it would seem to have been a case in which all the instruments of speech were present, but articulation had not been learned. There was utterance of an incoherent sort; the noise-making apparatus was there, but nothing intelligible came forth except the most heart-rending cries of pain. Such dumb ones abound; they cannot explain their own condition; if they talk to you it is incoherent talk; they contradict themselves every five sentences—you know that they are speaking what they believe to be true, but if you did not know that, you might think that they were telling you lies which confound each other. Their experience is a string of contradictions, and their utterance is even more complicated than their experience. It is very hard and difficult to talk with them very long, it wears out one's patience, and if it wears out the patience of the hearer, how burdensome must it be to the unhappy speaker! They pray, but they dare not call it prayer, it is rather the chattering of a crane or a swallow. They talk with God what is in their poor, silly

hearts, but ah, it is such a confusion and mixture that when it is done they wonder whether they have prayed or not. It is the cry, the bitter anguishing cry of pain, but it is untranslatable into words. It is an awful groan, an unutterable yearning and longing of the spirit, but they scarcely know themselves what it means.

You are weary with the details of this dolorous case, but I have not yet concluded the tale of woe. If any of you have never experienced the like, thank God for it, but at the same time pity and pray for those who are passing through this state of mind, and invoke now silently the hope of the Great Healer, that He would come and deal with them, for their plight is past the art of man.

The father told Jesus that his son was *pinning away*. How could it be otherwise, with one borne down by such a mass of disorders, so perpetually tormented that the natural rest of sleep was constantly broken? It was not likely that his strength would long be maintained in a system so racked and torn; and, mark you, despair of mind is an exceedingly weakening thing to the soul. I have known it even weaken the body till the worn-out sufferer has said with David, "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer." To feel the guilt of sin, to fear the coming punishment, to have a dreadful cry in one's ears of the "wrath to come," to fear death and to expect it any moment, above all, to disbelieve God, and write bitter things against Him, this is a thing to make the bones rot, and the heart wither. Read John Bunyan's *"Grace Abounding,"* and behold a picture there, drawn to the life, of a soul that was left as a heath in the desert so that it could not see when good came to it; you see a mind tossed up and down on 10,000 waves of unbelief, never resting at any time but perpetually disturbed and distracted with surmises, suspicions, and forebodings. If these attacks always continued, and were not sometimes intermitted, if there were

not little pauses, as it were, between the fits of unbelief, surely man would utterly fail and go to his home, a prey to his own cruel unbelief.

The worst point in the case was, *all this had continued for years*. Jesus asked how long he had been in this case, and his parent replied, "From a child." Sometimes God permits, for purposes which we do not understand, the deep distress of a tempted soul to last for years; I cannot tell for how many years, but certainly some have had to battle with unbelief on the very confines of the grave, and only at eventide has it been light to them. When they thought they must die in the dark, the Holy Spirit has appeared to them, and they have been cheered and comforted! The Puritans were known to quote the remarkable experience of Mrs. Honeywood as an instance of the singular way in which the Lord delivers His chosen. She, year after year was in bondage to melancholy and despair, but she was set at liberty by the gracious providence of God in an almost miraculous way. She took up a slender Venice glass, and saying, "I am as surely damned as that glass is dashed to pieces," she hurled it down upon the floor, when, to her surprise, and the surprise of all, I know not by what means, the glass was not so much as chipped or cracked! That circumstance first gave her a ray of light, and she afterwards cast herself upon the Lord Jesus. Sometimes extraordinary light has been given to extraordinary darkness, God has brought up the prisoner out of the innermost ward where his feet had been fast in the stocks, and after years of bondage He has at last given perfect and delightful liberty.

One more thing about this case: *The disciples had failed* to cast the devil out. On other occasions they had been successful—they said to their Master, "Even the devils are subject unto us." But this time they were utterly foiled. They did their best; they appear to have had some faith, or they would not have

attempted the task, but their faith was not at all equal to the emergency. Scribes and Pharisees gathered around them, and began to mock them, and if there had been divine power in all the company of the apostles to have worked the deed, they would gladly have done it; but there they stood, defeated and dismayed—the poor patient before them racked and tormented, and they unable to give him the slightest ease. Ah, it becomes a painful case when an anxious soul has gone to the house of God for years, and yet has found no consolation; when the troubled spirit has sought help from ministers, from Christian men and women; when prayers have been offered and not answered, tears have been shed and have been unavailing; when books which have been consolatory to others have been studied without results; when teachings which have converted thousands fail to create a good impression; and yet there are such instances in which all human agency is put to the rout, and when it seems as impossible to comfort the poor troubled one as to calm the waves of the sea, or hush the voice of the thunder. Hearts are to be met with still in which the evil spirit and the Holy Spirit are brought into distinct conflict, in which the evil spirit displays all his malignity, and brings the soul to the uttermost pitch of distress, in which I trust the Holy Spirit will yet display His saving power, and lead the soul out of its prison to praise the name of the Lord!

I thought I heard from some ungodly person a kind of whisper to himself, "I thank God I know nothing about these things." Pause before you thank God for this, for evil as this is and to be deplored, it were better that you had all this than remain altogether without spiritual sensibility. It were better to go to heaven burnt and branded, scourged and scarred every step of the road, than to slide gently down to hell as many of you are doing—sleeping sweetly while devils carry you along the road to perdition. It is little after all to be for a season

tormented and troubled by disturbance within, if it shall ultimately by God's interposition, end in joy and peace in believing, but it is beyond measure a dreadful thing to have, "Peace, peace," sung in one's ears where there is no peace, and then forever to discover one's self a castaway in the pit of hell from which there shall be no escape! Instead of being thankful, I would rather ask you to tremble. Yours is that terribly prophetic calm which the traveler frequently perceives upon the Alpine summit; everything is still; the birds suspend their notes, fly low, and cower down with fear. The hum of bees among the flowers is hushed. A horrible stillness rules the hour, as if death had silenced all things by stretching over them his awful scepter. Perceive you not what is surely at hand? The thunder is preparing; the lightning will soon cast abroad its mighty fires. Earth will rock; granite peaks will be dissolved; all nature will shake beneath the fury of the storm. Yours is that solemn calm today, O sinner! Rejoice not in it, for the tempest is coming, the whirlwind and the tribulation is near which shall sweep you away, and utterly destroy you! Better to be molested of the devil now than be tormented by him forever!

II. I have thus brought before you a very dolorous subject, but now, secondly, and may the Holy Spirit help us while I remind you of **THE ONE RESOURCE**.

The disciples were baffled. The Master, however, remained undefeated, and cried, "Bring him here to Me." We ought to use the means as far as the means will go. We are bound, further, to make the means more effectual than they ordinarily are. Prayer and fasting are prescribed by our Lord as the means of stringing up ourselves to greater divine power than we should otherwise possess. There are conversions which will never be worked by the agency of ordinary Christians. We have need to pray more, and by self-denial to keep our bodies more completely under, and so to enjoy closer communion with God

before we shall be able to handle the more distressing cases. The church of God would be far stronger to wrestle with this ungodly age if she were more given to prayer and fasting. There is a mighty efficacy in these two gospel ordinances. The first links us to heaven; the second separates us from earth. Prayer takes us into the banqueting house of God; fasting overturns the surfeiting tables of earth. Prayer gives us to feed on the bread of heaven, and fasting delivers the soul from being encumbered with the fullness of bread which perishes. When Christians shall bring themselves up to the uttermost possibilities of spiritual vigor, then they will be able, by God's Spirit working in them, to cast out devils, which today, without the prayer and fasting, laugh them to scorn. But for all that, to the most advanced Christian, there will still remain those mountainous difficulties which must be directly brought to the Master's personal agency for help. Still He tenderly commands us, "Bring them here to Me."

To make the text appear practical, let me beg you to remember that *Jesus Christ is still alive.* Simple as that truth of God is, you need to be reminded of it. We very often estimate the power of the church by looking to her ministers, her ordinances and her members; but the *power* of the church does not lie there—it lies in the Holy Spirit, and in an ever-living Savior. Jesus Christ died, it is true, but He lives, and we may as truly come to Him today as did that anxious father in the days of our Lord's earthly sojourn. Miracles have ceased it is said: so natural miracles have, but *spiritual* miracles have not! *We* have not the power to work either the one or the other. *Christ* has the power to work any kind of wonder, and He is still willing and able at this present hour to work *spiritual* miracles in the midst of His church. I delight to think of my Lord as a *living Christ* to whom I can speak and tell Him of every case that occurs in my ministry. He is a *living* helper to whom I may bring

every difficulty that occurs in my own soul, and in the souls of others. O think not that He is dead and buried! Seek Him not among the dead! Jesus lives, and living, is as able to meet with these cases of distress and sorrow as when He was here below.

Remember, too, that *Jesus lives in the place of authority.* When He was here He had power over devils, but up yonder He has greater power still; for here on earth He veiled the splendor of His Godhead, but up yonder His glory beams resplendent, and all hell confesses the majesty of His power. There is no demon, however forceful, who will not tremble if Jesus does but speak, or even so much as look at him. Today Jesus is the Master of hearts and consciences; He by His secret power, can work upon every one of our minds; He can depress us or He can exalt us; He can cast down or He can lift up. There cannot be a case which shall be difficult to Him. We have but to bring it to Him. He lives—and He lives in the place of divine power, and He can achieve the desire of our hearts. *Moreover, Jesus lives in the place of observation, and He still graciously interposes.* I know we are tempted to think of Him as one of far away, who does not behold the sorrows of His church, but I tell you, brothers and sisters, Christ's Honor is as much concerned at this moment in the defeat or victory of His servants as it was when He came down from the mountaintop. From the battlements of heaven Jesus looks today upon the work of His ministers; and if He sees them foiled He is jealous for the honor of His gospel, and is as ready to interpose and win the victory now as He was then. We have but to look up to our Lord. He sleeps not as Baal did of old. He is not callous to our woes, nor indifferent to our griefs. Blessed Master, You are able to succor, and strong to deliver! We have but to bring the matter which distresses us before You, and You will deal with it now according to Your compassion.

We should also remember, for our warning, *Jesus Christ expects us to treat Him as a living, powerful, interposing one, and to confide in Him as such.* We do not know what we miss through lack of faith; we conceive that certain persons are in a *hopeless* condition, and thus we dishonor Christ and injure them. We leave some cases, and give them up instead of presenting them, constantly, to Him; we limit the Holy One of Israel; we grieve His Spirit, and vex His holy mind; but if, as children trust their father, we would trust in Jesus unstaggeringly with an Abrahamic faith, believing that what He has promised He is able also to perform, then would we see even cases as that before us soon brought into the light of day; the oil of joy given instead of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Now, I earnestly urge parents and relatives, and any who have children or friends in distress of mind, to make a point of taking their dear ones to Jesus! Do not doubt Him—you vex Him if you do; do not hesitate to come and tell Him this morning the position of your beloved one. Hasten to Him, lay the sick one before Him, and even if while in prayer the case should become worse instead of better, hesitate not—you are dealing with the Infinite Son of God, and you need not fear, you must not doubt. God grant us divine grace in all things in our daily troubles, and especially in soul affairs, to bring all matters to the Lord Jesus.

III. Lastly, and with brevity, **THE SURE RESULT**.

When the child, or the man, or whichever he may have been, was brought before our Lord, the case looked thoroughly hopeless; he was deaf and dumb—how could the Master deal with him? Beside that, he was foaming and wallowing—what opening did there seem for the divine power? I cannot wonder that his father said, "If you can do anything, have compassion upon us." In most other instances the voice of Jesus calmed the spirit; but that voice could not reach the *mind*, for the ears

were sealed; never was there before the Savior a more thoroughly far-gone case, it was, to all appearances, hopeless. And yet the cure was divinely certain, for Jesus, without hesitating for a moment, said to the unclean spirit, "You foul spirit, you deaf and dumb spirit, I charge you, come out of him." Christ has power to charge devils with authority, and they dare not disobey. "And return no more unto him," said the Savior. Where Jesus heals, He heals forever! Once bring the soul out of prison, it shall not go back again; if He says, "I forgive," the sin is forgiven; if He speaks peace, the peace shall be like a river that never ceases running until it melts away into the ocean of eternal love. The cure was hopeless in itself, yet absolutely *certain* when Jesus put forth His healing hand. O, you who are broken down and desponding this morning, there is nothing that *you* can do, nor that *I* can do, but there is nothing which *JESUS* cannot do! Only go yourself this morning to Him, and with a word He will give you peace, a peace that shall never be broken again, but shall last till you enter into eternal rest.

Nevertheless the word of Christ, though sure to win its way, was stoutly opposed. The devil had great wrath, for he knew that his time was short; he began to rend and tear, and put out all his devilish force upon the poor child, and the poor creature, foaming and wallowing, fell down as if he were dead, under a terrible excitement. So often will it happen that at first the voice of Christ will make the spirit more troubled than before, not because Jesus troubles us, but because Satan revolts against Him. A poor tempted creature may even lie down in despair as dead, and those around may cry, "He is dead"; but then shall come the healing hand of tenderness and love, at whose touch the spirit shall survive! Ah, soul, if you should judge yourself to be as one dead; if your last hope should expire; if there should seem now to be nothing before you but a fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation, it is *then* that Jesus will

interpose! Learn the lesson that you cannot have gone too far from Christ! Believe that your extremities are only extremities to *you,* and not to *Him!* The highest sin and the deepest despair together, cannot baffle the power of Jesus! If you were between the very jaws of hell, Christ could snatch you forth; if your sins had brought you even to the gates of hell, so that the flames flashed into your face—if *then* you looked to Jesus, He would save you! If you are brought to Him when you are at death's door, yet eternal mercy will still receive you. How is it that Satan has the impudence to make men despair? Surely it is a piece of his infernal impertinence that he dares to do it. Despair! When you have an omnipotent God to deal with you? Despair! When the precious blood of the Son of God is given for sinners? Despair! When God delights in mercy? Despair! When the silver bell rings, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Despair! While life lasts, while mercy's gate stands wide open, while the heralds of mercy beckon you to come even though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are like crimson they shall be white as snow? I say again, it is infernal impertinence that has dared to suggest the idea of despair to a sinner! Christ unable to save? It can never be! Christ outdone by Satan and by sin? Impossible! A sinner with too many diseases for the Great Physician to heal? I tell you that if all the diseases of men were met in you, and if all the sins of men were heaped on you, and if blasphemy, and murder, and fornication, and adultery, and every sin that is possible or imaginable had all been committed by you—the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, could cleanse you from all that! If you will but trust my Master, and He is worthy to be trusted, and deserves your confidence; if you will but trust Him, He will save you even now. Ah, why delay? Why raise questions? Why debate? Why deliberate, mistrust, and suspect? Fall into His arms! He cannot reject you

for He has Himself said, "He who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Yet, poor wretch, I despair of converting you unless the Master does it! It is mine to tell you this, but I know you will not hear it, or, hearing it, you will reject it unless Christ shall come with power by His Spirit! O may He come today, and say to the evil spirit within you, "Come out of him, you foul spirit, and go no more into him. Let such a one be free, for I have redeemed him with My most precious blood." O pray, dear friends, that weak as my words have been this morning, disconnected as my thoughts have been, yet, nevertheless, God the blessed Spirit may bless them to the unfastening of bars of iron, and that gates of brass may be opened, and captive ones brought forth to liberty! The Lord bless such for His name's sake. Amen.

822 THE PANTING DEER – PS. 42:1

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, July 26th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"As the deer pants after the waterbrooks, so pants my soul after You, O God." — Psalm 42:1

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Psalm 42 and 43]

THERE IS SOMETHING to be lamented in this state of mind, for if the psalmist had maintained unbroken communion with his God, he would not have been so much panting after Him as *enjoying* Him. It is deeply to be deplored that we who sometimes bask in the sunshine of God's countenance, cannot live so as always to enjoy it. Why do we wander? Why do we grieve His Holy Spirit? Why do we turn aside from God, our exceeding joy? Why do we provoke Him to jealousy, and cause Him to make us grope in darkness, and sigh out of a lonely and desolate heart? There is much of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; if therefore we can join in the language of the text, we must not too much congratulate ourselves, for though it is a sign of divine grace to pant after God as the deer pants for the waterbrooks, yet it is an equally certain sign of a need of more grace, and the loss of a privilege which we should always strive to possess. We are yet but poor in spiritual things when we might be rich; we are thirsting when we might put flagons to our lips, and at the same time there is

very much which is commendable in the desire expressed in the text; the insatiable desire which burned in the psalmist's heart is a heavenly flame enkindled from above. If I have not my Lord in near and dear communion, it is at least the next best thing to be unutterably wretched until I find Him; if I do not sit at His banquets, yet blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness. If my beloved is not in my embrace, yet so long as I am not contented without Him, as long as I sigh, and cry, and follow hard after Him, I may be assured that I am in the possession of His love, and that before long I shall find Him to the joy of my soul.

Our text, then, has a warp and a woof of differing colors—sin and grace are mingled, the wine is mixed with water, yet it is wine; there is some alloy in the silver, yet silver it assuredly is. David sighs as none but a believer can do, and yet if he had not been a sinner too, such sighs had not been necessary. Brothers and sisters, such good and such evil are in you; search and look, and pray the Great Spirit to remove the ill and nourish the good.

I. Coming straight to the text, we shall notice in the first place, **THE OBJECT OF THE DESIRE** which the psalmist here describes.

The deer pants after the waterbrooks, and David pants after his God, the living God. I do not find him expressing a single word of regret as to his absence from his throne; probably he wrote this psalm when he had been expelled from his country by his ungrateful son, Absalom, but he does not say, "My soul pants after my royalties, and the splendor of the kingdom of Judah." No, not a word of it; he lets the baubles go, he gives up these uneasy pomps, content to let all go forever if he may but find his God. Well may we let the chaff go if we retain the wheat. I do not find him even mentioning his home, and yet he was a man of a loving spirit who delighted to bless his household; but here I read not a word concerning his palace,

his gardens, or his treasuries—not even for his children can he spare a sigh! Let him be banished from his own house, and it will not displease him if only he is not banished from the house of God also. To him his dwelling place was the Lord, and dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, his joys were all complete. Nor is there even a word about his much loved country; David was a very prince of patriots, yet he sighs not for Jerusalem; he pines not for the well of Bethlehem, neither the roses of Sharon, nor the lilies of the valley command his lamentations; for the excellence of Carmel, or the glory of Lebanon he utters no cry of desire. His one sigh is for his God, the God of his life, his exceeding Joy. When shall he come and appear before God? When shall he join in the assembly and keep the Sabbath? This one grief, like a huge torrent, swept away all minor streams, absorbing themselves into its own rush and volume. Like an avalanche which binds the snow masses to itself as it descends, so his one desire concentrated all the vehemence and force of his nature—His God, his God, he cannot live without his God! He cries for Him as a lost child for its father; as a bleating lamb he will not be content till he finds his parent.

David pined for permission to enjoy, again, the means of divine grace. He longed to go up to the tabernacle once again, he desired to see the priests offering the sacrifices, and himself go unto the altar of God. But observe, beloved, that he does not dwell upon the *outward* worship, nor dilate upon its symbolic pomp, and sacred splendor; he passes right through them all, as the priest of old passed through the outer court; only the *innermost* court will satisfy him; He penetrates within the shell, and desires the inward kernel. The carnal ordinance cannot content him, he must have the *spiritual* life and substance; he does not so much pine for the sacrifices as for his God, neither for the priest, nor for the altar, nor for the

tabernacle does he cry—but for his God! He had learned what modern professors have not learned, that the outward is nothing, and the inward is everything. "The kingdom of God is within you." It is not meat, nor drink, nor outward worship, and the God whom you adore is not pleased with your words and your genuflections; He is not pleased with your outward forms of speech and observance; He is only pleased when you press through all this and come to HIM—come into fellowship with Him and speak to Him as a spirit speaking with a Spirit—as one possessing a secret life speaking in the power of that life to the invisible and ever-living God! This is what David longed after then; not his throne, nor his house, nor his country, nor even the outward means of grace by themselves, but his *God* he panted after, his God alone; and this was his cry, "When shall I come and appear before God?"

I suppose the longing of the psalmist to have consisted of the following particulars. He longed to appear before his God, that is to say, *heartily to unite in the worship of the assembled crowd.* He could have worshipped alone, but sympathy has great power over the human mind, and to join with our brothers and sisters of one faith is very helpful to our devotion. Besides, in that age of *types*, there was one spot sacred above all others, and every devout Israelite was bound to go up to the sacred shrine. David remembered when the great shout went up at the tabernacle gate to Him—"whose mercy endures forever." In his loneliness, his fancy brought to his ears the song of the multitude as they chanted the glorious hallelujah, and he pined to be there to swell the strain. Not, however, because the merely *being there* would satisfy him, but because he felt if he could join the throng, he was in such a state of soul that he could throw his whole heart into the worship! And O, my brothers and sisters, you and I, when we lose for a while, the freshness of our spirituality, how we desire to get it back again,

that we may once more in vitality of godliness, worship God with His people. Oh, it is blessed to be here when we can stand and sing unto our Well-Beloved a song; when we can kneel with the congregation, and join in the common supplication, ourselves getting a grip of the angel, and holding Him fast, and not letting Him go until He blesses us! Is it not delightful to listen to the word preached in the great congregation, when the morsel is dipped in the honey for you in particular? What joy when I can glean among the sheaves for myself, and gather the handfuls that are let fall on purpose for me, and can carry home my part of the day's provision with humble gratitude. Is it not so, beloved? And if you have fallen into such a state of mind that you do not now enjoy the services of God's house as you once did, I would persuade you to ask the Lord to give you the strong desire of David—that you may again, in spirit in very truth appear before God, for I beseech you, never let the mere coming together content you, but let your panting be like that of the stag—after the waterbrook and nothing else, for GOD, for GOD, for GOD Himself, and nothing short of Him! It is right to pine for the outward services when we feel that they are profitable to us, or when we have been banished from the church of God for a while, or have been confined by sickness, or have been compelled to sit under an unprofitable ministry. We may then well sigh for the very *walls* which enclose the people whom we love! Often in France, and Switzerland, and Italy, have I felt the power of this text—

> "As the heart pants after the waterbrooks,
> So pants my soul after You, O God,"

and I have sung—

"Might I enjoy the meanest place
Within Your house, O God of grace!
Not tents of ease, nor thrones of power,
Should tempt my feet to leave Your door."

Further than this, David's desire comprehended a longing after *a restored confidence as to his interest in the love of God.* He knew that God loved him; three or four times over in his psalm he speaks like a man whose faith holds its own, "For I shall yet praise Him," he says, "who is the health of my countenance, and my God." A man may know his interest in Christ, and yet it may be a matter of some dispute with him; he may derive but little present comfort from it. but oh, how delightful it is when we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him; when the Lord's everlasting, unbounded, unchangeable love to us is no more a matter of question than our own existence; when we can say, "My Father, God," with an unfaltering tongue—this is the cream of life! And as the deer pants after the waterbrooks, so ought we to pant after this, that we may always know by the Infallible Witness of the Holy Spirit, that assuredly we are in the love of God, that our name is written in the Book of life, that we ourselves are forever dear to the eternal Father, and registered in the rolls of the family that He has begotten. Oh, happy they who possess this! Dear friend, if you do not at this hour enjoy it, *seek* it, seek it ravenously, beyond all bounds of intensity! Seek it until you find it in sweet dependence upon Jesus.

But David wanted more than this; not merely, as we have said, to worship God heartily, and to have a confidence in the divine love, but he longed to have that love shed abroad in his heart. You know, beloved, what this means, this outpouring of divine love, when it is not merely a *belief* with you that God

loves you, but you even *feel* that love of God shed abroad within you by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you. Oh, what joy this is! When it is at its full, it is ravishing, so that whether in the body or out of the body, we can sometimes scarcely tell. The love of God often overpowers the believer with its delight; he is faint with glory, sick with love. Have you ever felt as if you were dwelling in the suburbs of heaven, standing in the border land between the glory-life and the life that now is, tasting the clusters of Eshcol, and drinking from the crystal cups of the marriage supper? Beloved, under these rolling skies there is no bliss like the earnest of the Spirit, that foretaste of celestial feasts that pledge of joys to come! Oh, yes, beloved, when we have actual fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ, our joy is divinely crowned with a coronet of loving kindness; there is a floodtide of the river of life in our spirit, every thought is active, every power is inspired, every passion is elevated, and the whole man is filled with all the fullness of God—

> "Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
> And lost in its immensity."

Now, abiding fellowship with God ought to be our daily life. The enjoyment of God's love ought not to be a thing of yesterday, nor of today, but of *all* days; forevermore should we walk with God as Enoch did; and if for a while this holy joy is broken or withdrawn from us, then ought we with incessant importunity to take up the language of the text, and declare that, "as the deer pants after the waterbrooks, so pants our soul after You, O God."

Beloved, it may be this morning that I am speaking to some of you, who at one time were very lively and active Christians, making great advances in the divine life; but, alas, at the present

moment you feel yourselves to be very dull and heavy, and you are uneasy that it should be so. I thank God for that uneasiness! May these waves rise higher within you until they drive you back to your first moorings, and drift you to the place where once you had so much joy and peace. I think I know what your experience is—know it, alas, too well, by having experienced it myself—

"What peaceful hours we once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

We had just found Jesus, and we did not know how to think enough of Him, or speak well enough of His dear name. Now, alas, day will pass after day, and we scarcely say a word to His honor, or try to bring one poor heart to be enamored of Him. Then the services of God's house were inexpressibly delightful; we wished that Sundays were never over, and when they ended, we looked forward to the next occasion when we should meet with the saints of God; but now we come and we go like the door on the hinges; we find no water in the well of ordinances. Time was when we worked much for our Lord, and in all we did, we did it with all our might, throwing heart and soul into every labor; we felt His sweet presence in all our service, and indeed at all times; if we walked by the way, we walked with Him; if we awoke in the night, our soul was still with Him; if we were busy during the day, yet prayers were darted up in the little intervals between our business. But now, alas, it is not so as once it was! We can go day after day, not without prayer, thank God; not without praise, not without the assembling of ourselves together at ordinary times, but alas, without the *life*, without the *energy*, without the *joy*, without the

peace, without the holy *anointing* which we then knew. Oh, then, beloved, let us not settle upon our lees! Let us tremble, for chastisement is near! The rod will surely come upon us. God will not leave His children unchastened when they thus decline from His love. Gray hairs are coming upon us here and there, and now that we are made to see them, let us return to Him from whom we have backslidden; He, gently, this morning says to us by a brother's voice, "Return, you backsliding children." Let it be our business to return! Meanwhile let our spirits be filled with the earnest desire of the text, for it will give us wings with which to return! "As the deer pants after the waterbrooks, so pants my soul after You, O God."

II. We will now change the subject by considering **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DESIRE** which we have tried to describe.

These characteristics are brought out by a metaphor. David compares himself to a stag when tormented with thirst. The comparison brings out, in the first place, as the characteristic of this desire, *directness*. The deer pants—what for? You need not repeat the question or pause for a reply. Everybody can see by its smoking flanks, uplifted head, its palpitating heart, its rolling eyes, its thrust-out tongue that it is panting for the waterbrooks. So with David—he is ill at ease, but it is no question with him what he needs to give him rest of heart—"So pants my soul after You, O God," he says, and so he goes at once to the point. He knew where he was—there is no beating about the bush, no tacking to and fro, he directs his arrow straight at the center of the target. "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." beloved, it is a great mercy when you and I know what we need, for ungodly men do not know; they thirst, but like petulant children, they know not what they are crying for; they long, and they pant, and their question is, "Who will show us any good?" But you and I know that our great

need is the light of God's countenance, and we have come to this; and we will stand to this; and we will hold to this, that we will never cease pleading till we really see that face which makes the heaven of angels, and is all the heaven we desire.

Now, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, is your desire as distinct and direct towards God as was the desire of David in the text? If not, chide yourself; chide yourself that you should be hovering in circles where the straight line is so much better. Bring out in plain words your soul's desire. Let it well up from the lowest depths of your spirit, "I need; I need my God! I do not languish for that which others are fascinated with; I do not crave what others are ambitious for, but my God, my God, let me serve You, and enjoy You forevermore! Why have You forsaken me? Return unto me now! Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation; say unto my soul, 'I am your salvation.' Reveal Your Son in me, and be Yourself my ever-present friend."

Notice next in the text, *the unity* of the saint's desire. The deer longs after nothing else but waterbrooks. There may have been other times when the poor stag had other natural desires; he may have desired the grassy plains or the shady woods; but now, hunted, wearied, steaming, panting, it must drink or die. It has but one thought—the waterbrooks, the cool rippling rills, the refreshing pools. Now, beloved brother or sister, if you are about to get a blessing from the Lord, you will have but one desire— your God, your God! You will have gathered up all your affections into *one* affection and they will all be ascending towards your Lord; you will make no conditions, no stipulations with Him. If He will but come, even though He brings a rod with Him, you will be contented if He will but come; if you may but have His company, you will accept poverty, or the weary bed of sickness, or bereavement, or anything and everything which He may allot to you, if you may but have fellowship with Jesus! Let others ask for the bursting

wine vat, or the barn that is filled with corn, but for you it will be enough if you find your Beloved, and may but hold Him and not let Him go, for this is the one and only all-absorbing longing of your hungering and thirsting spirit—that you may find your God, and be comforted with His eternal consolation. Have you ever seen a little child that has lost its way crying in the streets for "Mother"? Now, you shall give that child what you will, but it will not stop its crying for "Mother." It has lost her, and cannot be content; take the little wanderer into your house; show it many toys, give it many sweets, but all are of no avail, it wants "Mother," and its little heart will burst unless it finds her! Now just show the little one its mother, let it fly into her bosom, and what more does it want? How perfectly content it is to be there. And so have I felt that if I might but sob myself to sleep on the bosom of my dear God, if I must have all else taken away from me, if so it should please Him, if I could but be with Him—no other desire or longing could ever cross my soul. I know it is so with all the family of the Lord our God; their love to Him makes His presence their all in all. See that dove just taken from the cage to be set free? Tempt it to remain with you; cast down the seeds it loves to feed upon' no, it will not dwell with you! It mounts, it makes a few circles in the air, and then having turned its eye to the dear familiar dovecote, it is all wing for home. What can stop its flight? Call to it, allure it as you will, straight as an arrow from a bow it flies to its own beloved home, and rests not its weary wings till it rests in the house of its love. Even so is it with the believer's soul; let him but go free and have his desire; unbind him of his corruptions; strip him of his cares; liberate him from his unbelief; let him have his freedom, and he will fly at once to his Lord Jesus, and nothing can tempt him to linger or find solace save in that blessed bosom of infinite love! A saint must have Christ to

abide with him as the one thing necessary to him, for this, like Mary, he leaves all Martha's cares to sit at Jesus' feet.

Observe next *the intensity* of this desire. "As the deer pants after the waterbrooks, so pants my soul after You." The panting of a thirsty deer is something terrible to see; it appears to thirst all over; every pore of its body is thirsting. It is not alone that heated tongue, those snorting nostrils, those glaring eyes, but the creature in every part, in every hair thirsts and pants; and so with the believer when he is without his God! If his soul is in a right state, he longs with all the force of his being to get back into his former happy condition; there is no stopping him, there is no making him pause. Surely the psalmist chose thirst for this reason, because it is a longing not to be appeased. Men have gone for days without food, but they could not during the same length of time, abstain from drink; in a long and weary march, soldiers have been able to endure much absence of solids, but we find in cases like the marches of Alexander, that soldiers have died by hundreds from lack of drink. It has been said hunger you can palliate for a while, but thirst is awful; you cannot reason with it; thirst has no ears. You cannot forget it, the more thirsty the man becomes, the more does the need thrust itself before him. O my God, painful as is such a spiritual thirst, yet would I desire to be always in this state when I am not in immediate fellowship with You! I would be so thirsty as to never to find a moment's peace, nor ease, nor comfort, except when I am near to You. "Tears have been my meat," says David, "day and night." As though he could get nothing from himself by way of comfort, for his soul flowed over at his eyes in briny tears which made him even thirstier; still his cry went up at morn and midnight, "My God, my God, I must behold You; I must approach You; I must enjoy Your love. Shut me not up in this dungeon, cast me not from Your presence, take not Your Holy Spirit from me; bring me to

Yourself again, for I long, I groan, I faint, I die for You! O come to me, and manifest Your favor." Such is the strong desire of the text, and such let ours be.

Further, we ought to say that the text manifests, as one characteristic of this longing, *a vitality.* As we have already said, thirst is connected with the very springs of life. Men must drink or die. So the Christian comes to feel that it is not a luxury to walk with God—a luxury with which he may perhaps dispense, but it is an absolute *necessity* for his spirit. Consider, my brothers and sisters, what danger we are in when we live at a distance from God; what danger of backsliding further and further; what danger of being tempted to gross sin. Consider how we are grieving the Holy Spirit; consider what comforts and mercies we are losing; consider what dishonor we are likely to bring upon the holy name we profess; consider how unkind we are to the Husband of our souls, to that dear heavenly lover, who did not spare His heart's blood that He might buy us for Himself, that He might have all our heart's love. Consider all this, and we shall make it a vital point to return to our God. It will not seem to us as though it *might* be or might not be, but we shall feel that it *must* be! We cannot be content without the light of Jehovah's countenance. O God, as the deer must die without water, so must my soul die without a sense of Your love again restored to me.

It would not appear in our version, but it appears in the Scotch Psalter, and it appears in the margin of our old Bibles, that the text describes *an expressive* desire. Note the Scotch version—

"Like as the deer for waterbrooks
In thirst does pant and bray."

In the margin of your Bibles you have, "As the deer brays after the waterbrooks"; it lifts up its voice; it is usually so silent, so all but dumb, but it now begins to bray in awful agony after the waterbrooks. So the believer has a desire which forces itself into expression. That expression may often be inarticulate; he may have groans which cannot be uttered, and they are all the deeper for being unutterable; they are all the more sincere and deep, because language may not be able to describe them. In the psalm before us, you find that David expressed his desire in prayers, and then as if these did not suffice, in tears, and then he turned to prayers again. The child of God will so continue to cry, and pray, and seek, and weep; nor will he be satisfied till by all manner of ways he has expressed before his God the insatiable longing of his thirsty spirit. I do therefore, dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, speak to you now, this morning, and say if you have lost the presence of God, if the light of Jehovah's countenance has been withdrawn from you, and you are desiring to return, cultivate that desire, and bring it to the highest pitch of fervor. If it is but like one live coal, put another to it! Pile your desires together till they glow like coals of juniper which have a most vehement heat. Pray God the Holy Spirit to fill your heart with all-consuming flames, till your heart is hot within you with longings after God. Take care that you express your growing desires day by day, and hour by hour, in perpetual solicitations that Jesus would come to you, and manifest Himself to you as He does not to the world. It is a blessed thing not to need thus to plead because you already rejoice in the smile of the blessed lover of your souls, but the next best thing is to sigh and cry until your head is once again on your Master's bosom, and the kisses of His lips are yours. Do you know there is sweetness about this bitter longing? When the desire is strong, the veil is thin, and the longing soul feels some gleams of love even while panting for it. Oh, it is

sweet to pant and hunger after Jesus! It is a sort of heaven to pine after Jesus! The sweet smell which He leaves behind Him makes it sweet to follow Him. To meditate on Him is precious; to admire Him at a distance is delightful, but oh, to HAVE Him! Angels cannot describe this joy! Yes, beloved in the Lord, it is a blessed thing to pine after Jesus, and even if the mountains of Bether rise between, it is precious to wait till, like a roe or a young deer, He comes leaping over the hills to reveal Himself to His languishing ones.

III. We will now, in the third place, turn to another point, **THE EXCITING CAUSES** of this desire after God.

These exciting causes are first, *something inward.* When a man pants after God, it is a secret life within which makes him do it; he would not long after God by nature. No man thirsts after God while he is left in his carnal state; the unrenewed man pants after *anything* sooner than God—he longs to escape from the presence of the Lord, for to him it is a dreadful thought that there should be a God at all; he would be glad enough if someone could prove beyond a doubt that there was no God. It proves a renewed nature when you long after God. It is a work of divine grace in your soul, and you may be thankful for it; it proves, however, that this renewed nature is not an independent thing which can live on its own resources. A camel does not pant after waterbrooks because it carries its own water within it, but the deer does because it has no inward resources; after being hunted on a hot day, it has no inward supplies, it is drained of its moisture. So are we; we do not carry a store of grace within, of our own, upon which we can rely; we need to come again, and again, and again to the divine fountain, and drink again from the eternal spring. Therefore it is because we have a *new life,* and that life is dependent upon God, and has all its fresh springs in Him, that we pant and thirst after Him. O Christian, if you had a sacred life which could be maintained by

its own energies within, you might do without your God, but since you are naked, and poor, and miserable apart from Him, you must come and drink day by day of the living springs or else you faint and die.

But the causes of the thirst were also *outward*. The stag pants for the waterbrooks not only from within, but because of the heat of the sun, or of the distance it has traveled; it also pants because of the dogs that have hunted it so far. And so the believer, and so David in the text. Enemies said to him, "Where is your God?" They were barking at his heels, his troubles had been multiplied—"All Your waves and Your billows have gone over me," and this made him turn to his God. I believe a man's enemies are often his best friends. To be pierced with sharp troubles now and then, will serve for our enlivening if divine grace so sanctifies the pain; any outward affliction which drives us nearer to our God, is a God-send for which we should be devoutly grateful.

Moreover, the source of David's longings lay partly in *the past*. The deer pants after the waterbrooks because it has a recollection of the coolness of the streams from which it has drunk before, and therefore it longs to drink again. So David said, "I remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the Hill Mizar." He remembered when he went with the assembly to the house of God, with the multitude who kept the Sabbath, and so do we long after God because we have a cheerful recollection of the comforts we have had in years gone by when we have been in His fellowship. Did you ever have such delightful seasons as when you have lived near to God? Were you ever as happy, and as blessed as when the Holy Spirit, like a sacred dove, brooded over your spirit? You know that these were the best days of your life; then, I pray you, remembering these sweet things, pant after them again, and so let the past quicken your desires.

Further, the desire which David had, sprung from *the present* as well as the past; he was at that present moment in a position of eminent distress: "All Your waves and Your billows," says he, "have gone over me." And this also should make us fly to God, for what distress is there which He cannot alleviate? What wound is there which the presence of God cannot heal? Our God is the cordial of our care, the balm of our woe—He is our all in all! Do but get to God, and you are like the mariner who has reached his port—the storms are now over for him, he cares little how the winds howl, or the waves roar. Believer, rest in your God, and you have obtained all your capacious powers can wish—and your troubles, and your wants, and your needs will be forgotten in your overflowing joy!

Moreover, there was a fourth spring, namely, *the future*. "Hope in God," he says, "for I shall yet praise Him." He panted after his God, because he had a keen perception that peaceful times would yet return to him. When a man is despairing, and fancies that the sun will never rise, it is hard to cheer him, but once indoctrinate him with the belief that there are happier seasons yet in store—predestinated periods when the light of God's countenance shall shine full in his face, and the man plucks up courage. O beloved, no child of God has any reason to despair! God will appear to His people; He cannot forsake them. "Can a woman forsake her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will *I never forget you."* It is not possible that He who counts the stars, and calls them all by names, should pass over one of His elect, His called, His adopted people. Be of good cheer then you shipwrecked one; though each billow should be angrier than the former, and drown you deeper in distress, yet the arm of God is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear. Look forward to better times, and looking forward let your panting and your longings

increase. May God give you a hunger because there is a banquet; may He give you a thirst because there are flagons of which you may drink; may He give you great desires, for if you open your mouth ever so wide He will certainly fill it.

I have thus tried to unveil the springs, the inward and outward, the future, the present, and the past from which our desires come. And now, before I conclude, I would ask every deserted believer whether he does at this time feel such vehement panting? If not, I do think it is a subject for most solemn anxiety; we ought to bestir ourselves lest we sleep ourselves into death. There are certain conditions of the human frame in which sleep becomes absolutely deadly—the poor patient must be kept in motion, must be wounded with needles, roughly treated lest he should sleep; and there are times when if we are permitted to sleep *spiritually*, it must end in our eternal ruin! At such times, when we feel the slumbering tendency coming over us, we ought to be alarmed lest we should turn out to be as others who sleep themselves into hell. May God awaken us, though it be by thunderbolts; may He shake us, even though it is with His roughest hand, and break us with His fiercest tempest, sooner than allow us quietly and calmly to glide down the stream of indifference until we are dashed over the precipice of apostasy, and are lost. Of course, the *true* child of God cannot be cast away, but now if I should have been a *deceiver*, even after having preached to others, or united in church fellowship with others, I could come to be myself a castaway. O that such thoughts may possess our minds till we are racked by them, and driven with the insatiable desire of the text to long after the presence of our God!

IV. Lastly, these words suggest, in concluding, a few **COMFORTABLE ENCOURAGEMENTS**.

I do not like to be in the condition of merely *longing* after God; I trust I can say I have walked with God, and enjoyed the

sense of His love for many a day. But ah, there is no thirst like the thirst of the man who has once known what the sweetness of the wine of heaven is. He that has never eaten manna, may be satisfied with the gritty brown bread of earth, but heavenly manna is a hunger-making thing; if you once get the flavor in your mouth, you will never be content unless you have it always there. It would be an awful thing for a man who has once known spiritual life, if he could be eternally cast away, because in hell no others would have known the joy which he has known, and consequently they could not know the misery which he feels in having lost it! Among all the miserable poor in this world, none are as wretched as those who once were rich, because they have acquired habits which make poverty unendurable; a poor king must be poor indeed. And what would it be for a child of God, if he once had been able to roll under his tongue the sweet morsel, and once had leaned on Jesus' bosom, if he could after all be tormented in the flames of hell? It would be awful, indeed if, after having drunk of the wines on the lees well-refined, he should be doomed to cry for a drop of water, like Dives, and after having eaten of fat things full of marrow, he should be cast into the land of drought and famine. Thank God it cannot be—it shall not be while God lives, for the strong hands of Christ, and of the Father will protect the chosen people. This shall not be, but still to lose a sense of the Lord's love, even for an hour, is dreadful enough. Yet there are one or two comforts which arise out of a longing and panting for the Lord. They are these—in the first place, if you have a longing after your God, where does it come from? Certainly it is not rooted in the dunghill of human nature! This is too fair a flower to have been blown here by the winds of chance, or to have sprung up naturally from your own corruptions. The eternal Spirit gave you that desire; thank Him for it; He has not quite given you up! This desire is a *gift* from

God—accept it gratefully, and see the Father's love reflected from the jewel.

Secondly, *if God has given me this desire, will He not fulfill it?* Is it after the manner of men to excite a desire and not fulfill it? And if we, being evil, could not be so unkind, much less shall our God. He will not tantalize His child, He will not make him hungry, and refuse to feed him. Oh, no! My God, if You have made me thus to thirst and pant, I may rest assured You will give me the waterbrooks to drink from, and I shall be refreshed with Your love, for let me remember in the next place, that if I have wandered from my God, *He is very willing to forgive.*

Oh, how ready is our Father to receive His wandering children. It is a part of the consequences of our sin that we think harshly of Him whom we have grieved; we offend our loving Husband, the Lord Jesus, and then we think He will not take us back again into those dear arms. But He will—"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from them." He tells us that if our brother offend us 70 times seven, we are yet to forgive him—and will not He forgive us? Recollect how often He forgave His people in the wilderness; remember, to come closer home, how often He has borne with us; how often when He might have swept us away with the besom of destruction, He has said, "They are My children," and He has again been a Father to us. Nevertheless, He has saved us for His name's sake. When we have been foolish and ignorant, and have been as beasts before Him, nevertheless we have been continually with Him, and He has held us with His right hand. Let us return to Him, then, since He is so ready and so willing to forgive; let us return to Him this morning, and let us remember that when we return out of the sadness and sorrow of our present estate, we shall very soon be uplifted into the light of God! It does not take the Lord long to make summer time in a wintry heart; one glance of His love

turns the darkness of the soul's night into the brightest day. Come to Him, Christian, and before you are aware of it, your soul shall be like the chariots of Amminadab! He will strike down Dagon in the temple of your heart, and set up the ark of the covenant in his place; He will turn your captivity as the streams in the south; you who were bound with chains shall be emancipated; you who were clothed with sackcloth shall wear fine linen and beauteous apparel, you shall anoint your faces with fresh oil, and you shall go forth in the dance with them who make merry in the Lord. Remember, time is not a thing to be taken into consideration with God: in an instant He wills it, and it is done, He commands, and it stands fast. To the dark earth He said, "Let there be light," and light flashed forth at once; and this very afternoon you may become among the very happiest of His people though you came here this morning heavily burdened. I have been crying today, "Lord, You know what a dry, parched-up plant my soul is, like yonder poor brown grass which has only a little root left, and no more, for it is all burnt up. Lord, there seems to be no dew nor rain these months for my soul, and therefore, O Lord, Your poor, pining plant is ready to die! Have You forgotten it? Will Your loving mercy never return?" Beloved, the rain will come upon us! Perhaps even during this sermon the dew has fallen, and you who were like the heath in the desert are beginning to blossom, and bring forth fruit unto His name. O may it be so, and may you who thought that the Lord had forgotten you find that He remembers you in the fullness of His loving-kindness and in the plenitude of His grace! So may God do to each one of us, for His name's sake. Amen.

823 NOAH'S FLOOD – MATT. 24:39

A Sermon
Delivered on Thursday Evening, March 5th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"The flood came and took them all away." — Matthew 24:39

WE COMMONLY SAY that "there is no rule without an exception," and certainly the rule that there is no rule without an exception has an exception to itself, for the rules of God are without exception. The rule that God will punish the ungodly is without an exception; the rule that all who are out of Christ shall perish is a rule without an exception, and the rule that all who are in Christ shall be saved is also without an exception.

I. I shall have to call your attention tonight, to three rules that are without exception, and the first is the one before us— **"THE FLOOD CAME AND TOOK THEM ALL AWAY."** The destruction caused by the deluge was universal, it did not merely sweep away some who were out of the ark, but it swept them *all* away; there were doubtless, distinctions in those days, as there are now, for never has there been one dead level of equality among the sons of Adam since men multiplied on the face of the earth. Many in that time were wealthy, they had accumulated stores of gold and silver; they were rich in merchandise, invention, or plunder; they were rich in the produce of the field; they owned broad acres of land; they had multiplied to themselves the conveniences, and the luxuries of life, but the flood came and swept them all away. Not one rich

man could escape with all his hoards, neither could he purchase life if he had given all his wealth, for the flood came and swept them *all away*. There were no rafts of costly cedar, or towers of expensive masonry which could stand above the devouring deluge; death laughed at miser and merchant, millionaire and monarch; all, all were swallowed up in the angry flood.

There were some in those days who were extremely poor; they worked hard to gain enough to keep body and soul together, and they were scarcely able to do that; they had to suffer every day—

"The oppressor's wrongs, the proud man's insolence,"

but I do not find that as a reward for their sufferings they were spared. No, when the flood came, it swept them all away; the pauper out of the ark perished as well as the prince; the poor and miserable peasant died, washed away from the filth of his mud hovel, as monarchs were from their palaces; the beggar without shoes for his feet died—the flood had no pity on his rags; he who swept the street-crossing, and stood waiting for a casual alms was taken away with the aristocrats who had pitied him. The flood came and swept them all away; the unrelenting billows meted out an equal fate to all who were outside the one ark of safety. *And so will it be at the last.* As the great man will not purchase an escape by all that which he has stored up, so neither will a man be delivered because of his poverty. There was a rich man in hell, we read—poor men have been there, and are there now, as riches cannot save from hell, so neither can poverty raise to heaven. The grace and justice of God are independent of society, and rank, and state, and condition! What matters it to the Lord how much or how little of yellow metal you have about you? He measures no man by his purse, but by his *soul,* and he whose soul is unpardoned is

lost, be he rolling in plenty, or pining in need. You must be born-again! You must believe in Jesus! You must in one word, get into the ark, or when the flood comes it will sweep you all away, be you rich as Dives, or poor as Lazarus.

There were, in those days, *learned* men in the world, men who searched the stars at night; there were men who had deciphered the constellations, who had pried into the secrets of matter; there were men who had ransacked science, and as far as men had gone (and we do not know but what they went a very long way), had pierced into the innermost recesses of knowledge. *But when the flood came it swept them all away.* There goes the philosopher; you can hear his dying gurgle, there, floating on the stream is the head of an antediluvian Solomon; the flood has swept away masters of arts, doctors of law, and rabbis in divinity. No man was able to escape the deluge by all that he had ever learned; knowledge is no life buoy; logic is no swimming belt; rhetoric no lifeboat. Down, down they go, and all their science with them, beneath the shoreless waves. And as for the illiterate who were no doubt numerous then, as now, who could only count as many as the number of their fingers, who knew none of the niceties of learning or of eloquence—when the flood came it swept them all away, so that knowledge, except it be of one particular kind, namely, the heart-knowledge of Christ Jesus, will not deliver us from final destruction. And, on the other hand, although ignorance, if it is not willful, is some palliation for sin, yet it is never such an excuse as to allow sin to go unpunished! There is a hell for those who knew their Master's will, and did it not, and there is also a hell for those who would not know, but who lived and died willfully ignorant of the things of God. The flood came and swept them all away. You men who are orthodox in doctrine; you who can talk about theology, and claim to be masters in Israel, if you do not belong to Christ, the flood shall sweep you all away! And you who say,

"What does it matter? Creeds, what are they but handles of old rubbish? We do not study our Bibles, and do not want to know the doctrines taught therein," I tell you, sirs, unless you know Christ, and are found in Him, your ignorance shall be no sufficient excuse for you—when the flood of fire shall come, it shall sweep you all away!

I doubt not that among those who perished in Noah's flood, there were many who were very zealous in the cause of religion—perhaps some who had officiated as priests in the midst of their families, and possibly even at God's altar; they were not a godless race in those days, so far as the form and profession went; they had a religion—even those sons of Cain had a religion, and indeed, generally when men are worst at heart, they prate most about outward religion. We may suppose it was so in Noah's day, but when the flood came, these men being out of the ark, whether priests or not, did not escape—it swept them all away. And there were others, no doubt, who were profane, who lived in disregard of God, or who blustered out infidel expressions concerning Him, but the flood made no distinction between the hypocritical priest and the direct blasphemer; when it came, it swept them all away! O you sons of Levi, you who wear the robes of priesthood, and profess to be sent of God to teach others, with all your boasted magical powers, if you do not believe in Jesus as poor guilty sinners, and look up to the cross alone for your salvation, when the flood of fire comes, it will sweep you all away! You will drown, sir priest, despite your baptismal regeneration, and your sacramental efficacy! You will sink with a lying absolution on your lips down to the nethermost hell! And, O you who rail against religion, and boast that you are not hypocrites; you doubtless think yourselves honest, but do not imagine that your impudent "honesty," as you choose to call it, will exonerate you at the last tremendous day, for in that day of wrath the fiery

deluge shall sweep you all away! Short work will God make with doubters then; they shall behold Him, and wonder, and perish, for a short and sharp work will He make in the earth; quick work will He make with the hypocrites in that day, for though they call, He will not answer them—and when they begin to cry to Him, He will mock at their calamity, and laugh when their fear comes. The fiery flood shall sweep all away at last—whether religious or profane, for they have not fled to the ark of Christ, and so have rejected the one only shelter.

Let me solemnly remind you in this congregation tonight, that in that day of destruction, some of the oldest men who had lived perished—older men than you, though your head is gray or bald; older women than you, though you have nourished and brought up children, and dandled your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren upon your knees—they went down the stream with others, perishing as though they had never seen the light! And the young died too; that one dreadful destruction took away the little child in his beauty, and the young man in his strength, and the maiden in her bloom. The flood took them all away! And so with all of us who have attained to adult years, and have arrived at knowledge so as to judge between good and evil—if we are not found in Christ, the flood of fire shall take us all away! We know not at how young an age we may be responsible; let the child never presume upon its youth. We have heard of fools of 20 pleading "infancy" in our courts of law, and of all pieces of roguery sanctioned by the law, I have thought that the plea of "infancy" from young men of 19 and 20 years of age, who have stolen jewelry, and I know not what, to spend upon their lusts—of all pieces of villainy, I say, that seems to me to be the most intolerable! But there shall be no such plea of infancy for you boys and girls, and young people, at the last great day; if you know right from wrong, and if you can understand the gospel of Jesus Christ, at your peril do you

reject it! At your peril do you neglect it! No, neither shall the young nor the old escape except by coming to Christ. "You must be born-again," is of universal application to you who are young, and to you who are gray-headed; no youth can excuse, no experience can exempt, but alike will the flood of divine wrath overwhelm every human soul, unless we find refuge in the ark of the covenant of grace, even the work and person of Jesus, the bleeding Lamb of God.

This universality I shall have to illustrate in yet another way. I can suppose that when Noah built the ark; a most absurd thing to do upon all the principles of common reason apart from his faith in God, there were a great many persons who heard of this and wondered. It was a very huge ship; the greatest that had ever been built; a conception in navigation which altogether staggered the minds of men in his day. When Noah built this vessel, and built it on the dry land far removed from any river or sea, it must have been a very great wonder, and have caused abundance of talk through all the neighboring nations. I should not wonder but what the tidings spread far and wide, and there were some who as soon as they heard of it, said, "A madman! I wonder his friends do not confine him; what a lunatic he must be!" Having made that remark, they cracked a joke or two about it, and fell into the habit of sneering at a thing so very absurd that it passed into a proverb; and when a man did a silly thing, they said, "Why, he is as foolish as old Noah!" Ribald jests were all that Noah could get from them; they mocked, ridiculed, and utterly despised him, but the flood came and took them all away, and there was an end to their jests, their sarcasms, their jeers; the flood silenced them most effectively. So will it be with any of you who have ridiculed the gospel of Christ; you will find in the great and terrible day of the Lord, that your laughter shall have no power over death; you will find it will win you no reprieve from the agonies of

hell; there will be no room for infidelity in that tremendous day! God will be all too real to you when He tears you in pieces, and there is none to deliver you, and the judgment will be all too real when the thunder claps shall wake the dead, and the books shall be opened and read by the blaze of lightning— and the sentence shall be pronounced, "Depart, you cursed!" Beware, you despisers, and wonder, and perish! Beware now, while yet there is a day of divine grace to light you to heaven, for remember it will not last forever. May eternal love save any of us from perishing in devouring fire as Noah's despisers did in the devouring flood.

There were other people no doubt, who, when they heard about Noah, criticized his building. I can imagine some of the shipbuilders of the time looking on, and telling him that the keel was not arranged quite right, and that ingenious plan of pitching the great ship within and without would be sure to be very closely criticized, for it seems to have been a great novelty, not an invention of man, but a revelation from God. Then there was the making of only one window—why, we who read about it now, do not know what it means, and all the plans that have ever been drawn of Noah's ark do not seem to fit the description given of it. "Why," said the wise shipwright, "that thing will never float on the top of the flood, if it should chance to come; and besides, it has been so long in building, that it will be sure to get the dry rot." What wise things were said about it! If they had been able to print them in those days, how many critical treatises would have been published against "that old wooden box of Noah's," as they very likely would have called it! All these critics could have built it a great deal better, I have no doubt, but they did not build at all and though they found fault, and could do it so much better than Noah did, yet somehow or other they were drowned, and he was saved. So now in this world, we constantly find men who eat up the sins

of God's people as they eat bread. "Oh yes," they can say, "there is something in religion, no doubt, but then look at your imperfections, and your faults!" And, brothers and sisters, they need not look far to find them; they can soon find 10,000 points in which we might be a little improved, and sometimes I have no doubt that our critics are in some respects better than we are; many a worldly man has a better temper than a genuine Christian. I am sorry to say it, but I have known unconverted people much more generous than some who are converted. Christians do excel in some qualities, but still, still, still, there is the solemn truth that the sharpest and most philosophical critic of other people, if he is out of Christ, will be swept away, while the men whom he criticized and condemned, if they are found humbly believing in Jesus, shall be saved through faith in Him! It all hinges on this one matter, inside or outside the ark—inside the ark a thousand imperfections, but all saved; outside the ark a thousand excellences, but all drowned without a single exception!

Now there may have been on the other hand, among those who came to see father Noah, and his big ship, some who took his side. I never knew a man so big a fool but what some sided with him, so perhaps there were some who said, "Well, after all, do not be too hard upon him; he is a respectable patriarch; he is a man who follows his convictions—his convictions are very absurd, no doubt, but still it is a fine thing in these days to see a man really sincere. We do not like to see the man so infatuated, but though we cannot help wishing that he were a *sane* man, yet it is almost better to see a man insane, and carry out his convictions, than to see him trifling as so many are childishly trifling with their principles." Many a gentleman who looked at the ark, after he said that, went home with a wonderful ease of conscience, and thought, "Now I have said a very good thing; I have put a spoke in the wheel of some of those cavilers; I

have stood up for the good old man, for a *very* good old man, I have no doubt he is, though very much deceived." Ah, but when the flood came, it swept all these people away as well! They were very kind in their remarks, and very patronizing in their air, but the flood swept them all away. And do you not know such people now? Why, there are some of them here tonight! Listen to their gentlemanly talk! How generously they speak! "Well, yes, I like to see these Christian people so earnest; I dare say they do a great deal of good; I like to hear a preacher speaking out so plainly; I like to see these people very zealous—in these days it is very refreshing to see people zealous about *anything*, for there is so much liberalism, and policy, and so on, that we like to find people decided, even though we should think them a little too dogmatic and bigoted." O sirs, we thank you for your good opinion of us, but unless you *repent,* you shall likewise perish! Your excellent remarks will not save you, and your very lenient, and gentlemanly and broad-church views of religion will not assist you! You may hold all those views which are so tolerant, and so excellent, and we are *glad* you hold them, and yet you may have no share in Christ's salvation! You are a sensible man for holding such charitable views, but, sensible as you are, unless you come to Christ, you will have to perish even as the most bigoted persecutors!

Besides these, there were some other people who liked Noah better still. They not only excused and defended him, but they sometimes grew very warm about it. They said, "Father Noah is right; we see his life, we mark his manners and conversation; and he is a better man than they are who ridicule and despise him. We are convinced by his preaching that his testimony is true, and we will help him, and stand up for him; we do not like to hear the jeers and uncivil remarks that are made about him—they cut us to the quick." Then I suppose you are going into the ark, are you not? "Well, we do not know

ourselves about *that*. Perhaps we may by-and-by; we are thinking of it; we have taken the matter into very serious consideration, and we think it to be a very proper thing to do, a very right thing to do, but at the same time it is hardly convenient right now. We will wait a little longer." "Why," says one, "I am not married yet." And another says, "There is a banquet to be held on such-and-such a day; I must go to that; you know men must eat and drink, and therefore I am not going into the ark just yet." Well, now, these good-meaning, procrastinating people who were postponing and putting off, what became of them? Did one of them escape? Alas, no! When the flood came, it took them all away. What? Not save *one* of them, those who would be right if they had a little longer time? Not spare those who have good resolutions in their throats—who are almost persuaded to be Christians? No, not one of them! They all went down in the common wreck, and perished in the universal destruction, for good resolutions save no man unless they are put into practice. Almost persuaded to be a Christian is like the man who was almost pardoned, but he was hanged anyway. Almost persuaded to be a Christian is like the man who was almost rescued, but he was burnt up in the house. As old Henry Smith says, "A door that is almost shut is open; a man who is almost honest is a thief; a man who is almost saved is damned." O take heed of that, you halters between two opinions! You awakened, but not decided! You are awakened, but not converted! Noah's friends perished—his very dearest friends who were not in the ark; when the flood came, it swept them all away, and so must you, our sons and daughters, if you give not your hearts to the Lord.

So, to close this recapitulation, you have often been told that the very workmen who worked for Noah, and who were no doubt paid their wages, or they would not have worked, also perished. They helped saw the wood, lay the keel, drive the

bolts, put in the oakum, use the pitch, strengthen the timbers, but after all that, they had done not one of them escaped; and so the chapel-keeper, the pew-opener, the elder, the deacon, the minister, the bishop, the archbishop—all those who have had a function in the church, who have had something to do with the good staunch vessel of Christ's gospel— unless they, themselves, are *in* Christ by a living faith, they must perish as much as the despisers and the outcasts!

Here, then, is the solemn truth of God—*all out of Christ lost—all in Christ saved! All unbelievers perish—all believers are preserved in Him.* Here is a rule without an exception! Very briefly we shall now have to speak upon a second subject.

II. It appears that when the flood came, it found them all eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, and according to the text, **THIS ALSO WAS A RULE WITHOUT EXCEPTION**.

Is it not a very solemn thing that it is so now, that without any exception, the mass of mankind are still neglectful of their souls, still busy about their fleeting interests, and negligent of eternal realities? There are no exceptions to this rule among *natural* men! Gracious men care for these things, but all natural men are like these men in the days of Noah. While I was musing this afternoon, I felt surprised at it. I said to myself, "What? Not one man in Noah's day that was anxious to be saved in the ark—not one? Why, the population of the globe is supposed, by some, to have been greater at that time than it is now! Owing to the extreme length of years to which men then lived, the deaths were fewer, and the population increased more rapidly, and yet out of them all was there not *one* who sought after God *naturally*—not one?" It was an extraordinary thing that there was not one who would believe in the reiterated prophecies of Noah, and find shelter in the ark; but is it not more strange still, only it is strangely true, that out of all the unregenerate, until

they are quickened by divine grace, there is not one who cares to flee to Christ? "You will not come unto Me that you might have life," is a rule of universal application; men will not come to Christ, but had rather perish in their sins than come and put their trust in Him.

I suppose the reason lies in three things. First, there is men's universal indifference about their souls; a wanton carelessness about their noblest part, their truest selves. But that is a strange thing! A man is always earnest about his life—"Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." If a man thinks he is likely to perish by burning, what cries he will raise; what exertions he will make to get out of the room; if he is near to drowning, how he kicks and struggles; if he is sick, how quickly he sends for the doctor, and how anxious he is to get the best advice within his reach so that his life may be preserved. And yet the preservation of his highest life seems to be to him a matter of no consequence at all! Every thinking man must feel that his true self is his spirit, his soul; that his body is not he, himself, but simply a sort of garment that he wears—a house in which he lives, and yet men spend their time from morning till night in finding clothes and food for this outside house! But the tenant that dwells within is, poor creature, quite forgotten. That is odd, is it not? Does it not seem to prove that man is degraded into something less than a reasonable creature by his sin, so that he acts like a beast? When a man has to live but a little time in this world, he wishes to be happy in it; if a man only stops for an hour in an inn, what a noise he makes if the chimney smokes, if the tablecloth is not clean, if chops are not done to a turn; and while he knows that his better self must live forever in another world, he does not concern himself about *that* world, or whether he shall be happy in it or not! Strange!—

"'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing."

It is a miracle of *madness* that men should be so indifferent to the interest of their souls, their *immortal* souls, that they should go to sleep not knowing whether they will wake up with the never-dying worm, or arise to enjoy with Jesus, the surpassing splendors of eternity! Yet this indifference is universal! O brothers and sisters, you and I have need to pray that God would stir this dead sea; that He would speak with His quickening voice, and make men alive to these spiritual things, or else in the graves of their indifference they will rot forever!

The second reason for this indifference lay, no doubt, in universal *unbelief*. Is it not a strange thing that they did not, one of them, believe Noah? Noah was an honest man; some of them had known him for many years, yes, for *hundreds* of years they had known him, for they lived so long then. He spoke like an honest man; he preached with vehemence and power, but not one believed him; not one soul believed him so as to escape from the wrath to come—not one! Now that is odd, for as I have said before, no lie that was ever told was so incredible but what *somebody* or other was found to believe it; much more should some be found to receive the *truth*. Yet here was a truth of God that looked so probable, on account of the sin of man, and yet nobody was found to believe it; they universally rejected it! Even so it is with the gospel of Christ; we come and tell our fellow men that the Son of God was made flesh to redeem men, that whoever trusts in Him shall be saved, but they will not believe it, though we have proved it, hundreds of us, thousands of us—and we tell them as solemnly, and as earnestly as we can, that we have tasted and handled of these things. We tell them that they are not cunningly devised fables, but are in very truth, most precious and proven realities! And yet, without the grace

of God, there is not a single one, high or low, rich or poor, who will so believe as to try for himself! They shake their heads, and go on their way, and universally live and die in unbelief—*unless sovereign grace* steps in. A strange thing, a marvelous thing! "Jesus marveled because of their unbelief," and well may we marvel because of the universality of this sin.

Then a third cause for this general indifference was that they were always and altogether given to worldliness. The text seems to hint that they did not think of preparing for the coming flood because they were so busy in the base enjoyment of mere *eating*. Some of them were gluttons, and others who did not eat so much, yet ate right well when they did eat, and daintily; they were worshipping that god that Paul speaks of—the belly. Alas, good feeding ruins many, and men dig their way to hell with their teeth! Like brutes they care only to be filled; others were drunks, ah, how merry were they in their cups! How they judged a glass of wine, and told its age to a year! They were bent upon swallowing hogsheads of dainty liquor; they were drowned like Duke Clarence, in their vats of wine; no doubt they had in their way, their Lord Mayors' feasts, and their Aldermen and Companies' dinners, and I know not what besides; and they were all so occupied with these things—these crying necessities of the life of swine, that they did not, and could not think of anything superior to that. They were married and given in marriage; this was a serious business, and must be attended to; how could they forsake their wedding feasts, and their newly-married brides? These things engrossed all their thoughts, and yet, friends, and yet what was the use of eating and drinking when they were to be drowned the next day? And what was the use of being married, when they were to be drowned in the morning? If they had looked at these things in the light of *faith*, they would have despised them; but they only used the bleary eyes of *sense,* and thus they set great store upon

these present things of mirth. Yes, and so it is with the wicked man nowadays; he gets rich, but what is the use of being wealthy if you must be damned? Fool that he is, if he buys a gold coffin, how would that help him? Suppose he is laid out with a bag of gold in each hand, and a pile of it between his legs—how will that help him? Others seek to get learning, but what is the good of learning if you only sink to hell with it? Take up the learned man's skull, and what is the difference between that and the skull of the poorest pauper who scarcely knew his letters? Brown impalpable powder—they both crumble down into the same elements. To die in a respectable position, what is the use of it? What are a few more plumes on the hearse, or a longer line of mourning coaches? Will these ease the miseries of hell? Ah, friends, you have to die! Why not make ready for the inevitable? Oh, if men were wise, they would see that all earth's joys are just like the bubbles which our children blow with soap—they glitter and they shine, and then they are gone, and there is not even a wreck left behind. O that they were wise to enter the ark, to look to Christ, so that when the floods rise they might be found safe in Him!

Here, then, comes this general rule never to be too much lamented, and which ought to make every Christian's heart break with heaviness—that universally and everywhere, in the very presence of the coming judgment, and between the very jaws of death and hell, the whole human race remains indifferent, unbelieving, worldly, and still will so remain until the flood of fire comes and sweeps them all away! *Thus will they all sport until they perish, unless eternal love prevents it.*

III. The last consideration shall be but very briefly handled, but it is a very comforting one, namely, that **ALL WHO WERE IN THE ARK WERE SAFE**.

Nobody fell out of that divinely-appointed refuge; nobody was dragged out; nobody died in it; nobody was left to perish

in it. All who went in came out unharmed, they were all preserved in it, and they were all safely brought through the dread catastrophe. The ark preserved them all, and so will Jesus Christ preserve all in Him; whoever may come to Him shall be secure! None of them shall perish; neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. Think what strange creatures they were that were preserved! Why, unclean animals went into that ark two and two! May God bring some of you who have been like unclean animals unto Christ! Great swine of sin, you have wandered farthest in iniquity, and defiled yourselves, yet when the swine were in the ark they were safe—and so shall you be! You ravens, you black ravens of sin, if you fly to Christ, He will not cast you out, but you shall be secure! If electing love shall pick you out, and effectual grace shall draw you to the door of that ark, it shall be shut upon you, and you shall be saved! Within that ark there was the timid hare, but its timidity did not destroy it; there was the weak coney, but despite its weakness, in the ark it was all safe. There were to be found such slow-moving creatures as the snail, some darkness-loving creatures like the bat, but they were all safe. The mouse was as safe as the ox, and the snail was as safe as the greyhound; the squirrel was as secure as the elephant, and the timid hare was as safe as the courageous lion—not safe because of *what* they were, but safe because of *where* they were, namely, in the ark. Oh, what a medley the Lord's people are! What strange beings! Some few of them fathers, but not many; the great mass of them little children who, though they should have grown, are still very carnal, and only babes in Christ instead of full grown men; yet all safe! All alike in security, however much they may differ—varying temperament, but unvarying security—differing in experience, but the same in oneness to Christ, and all in Him. "Why, being justified by faith, we have peace with God,

through our Lord Jesus Christ." And so we have, whether we are great or small—

"To us the covenant stands secure,
Tho' earth's old columns bow.
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now."

When the storm beat upon the ark it might have destroyed the lion quite as easy as the mouse, but it destroyed neither, because the sides of the ark could bear the tempest, and when the floods came, the vessel mounted higher, and higher, and nearer towards heaven, the deeper the waters were. So with us— let storms and furious tempests come, and our sins assail us, and our sorrows, too—yet we who are weakest, are quite as secure as the strongest because we are in Christ—and Christ shall outlive the storm, and bear us upwards, nearer and nearer to the heaven of God!

May God grant us divine grace to be found of Him in peace in the day of the Lord's appearing— when the elements shall melt, and the skies are rolled up like a scroll! As I have already said, it all hangs upon that question, "Do you believe in Christ?" If your heart trusts Christ, you are safe, come what may; but if you rest not in Him, you are lost, come what will. God save you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

"Come to the ark, come to the ark;
To Jesus come today!
The pestilence walks forth by night,
The arrow flies by day;

Come to the ark: the waters rise,
The seas their billows roar
While darkness gathers o'er the skies,
Behold a refuge near.

Come to the ark, all, all who weep
Beneath the sense of sin!
Without, deep calls unto deep,
But all is peace within.

Come to the ark, before yet the flood
Your lingering steps oppose!
Come, for the door which open stood
Is now about to close."

824 THE HEAVEN OF HEAVEN – REV. 22:4

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 9th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And they shall see His face." — Revelation 22:4

THE ITALIANS so much admire the city of Naples that their proverb is, "See Naples and die," as if there remained nothing more to be seen after that fair bay and city had been gazed upon. To behold the far fairer sight mentioned in the text, men might well be content to die a thousand times! If it shall please God that we shall depart this life before the Master's appearing, we may laugh at death, and count it to be *gain*, seeing that it introduces us to the place where we shall see His face. "You cannot see My face and live," said the Lord of old, but that was true of *mortals* only, and refers not to *immortals* who have put on incorruption! In yonder glory they see the face of God, and yet live; yes, the sight is the essence and excellence of their life! Here, that vision might be too overpowering for the soul and body, and might painfully separate them with excess of delight, and so *cause* us death; but up yonder the disembodied spirit is able to endure the blaze of splendor, and so will the body, when it shall have been refined and strengthened in its powers by resurrection from the dead. Then these eyes, which now would be struck with blindness should they look upon the superlative glory, shall be strengthened to behold eternally the Lord of

angels who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express Image of His person.

Brothers and sisters, regard the object of our expectations! See the happiness which is promised us! Behold the heaven which awaits us! Forget, for a while, your present cares; let all your difficulties and your sorrows vanish for a season, and live for a while in the future which is so certified by faithful promises that you may rejoice in it even *now!* The veil which parts us from our great reward is very thin; hope gazes through its gauzy fabric; faith, with eagle eyes, penetrates the mist which hides eternal delights from longing eyes. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for them who love Him; but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God." And we, in the power of that Spirit, have known, believed, and anticipated the bliss which every winged hour is bringing nearer to us.

While our Lord was here below, it would have been a great delight to spiritual minds to have seen His face; I can scarcely imagine, but perhaps some of you mothers can, what must have been the joy that flooded the heart of Mary when, for the first time, she gazed upon the lovely face of the holy child Jesus. I suppose the infant Jesus to have possessed an extraordinary beauty; a soul absolutely perfect as His was, must surely have been enshrined in a body perfect in its symmetry, and attractive in its features. The overshadowing Spirit, by whose miraculous agency He was conceived of the Virgin, would scarcely have created an uncomely body, and much less would He have fashioned an unlovely body for so delightful a person as the Only-Begotten of the Father! I think as His virgin mother looked upon Him, and as the wise men, and the shepherds gazed into that dear face, they might all have said with the spouse of old, "You are fairer than the children of men." That

manger held an unrivalled form of beauty! Well may painters strain their art to paint the mother, and her wondrous child, for the spectacle brought shepherds from their flocks, sages from the far-off land, and angels from their thrones—heaven and earth were alike intent to see His face!

It would have been no small joy, I think, to have seen the face of Jesus of Nazareth in the years of His maturity, when His countenance beamed with joy. "At that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, Father, I thank You." One would like to have basked in the radiance of a *sinless* smile—it was a vision fit only for the pure in heart to have traced the fair marks of joy upon the face of Jesus, and such a joy, so spiritual, so refined, so heavenly, and so divine! "Father, I thank You," blessing God for that eternal decree of election by which He has hidden the things of the kingdom from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes, and saying, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." Equally rare must have been the vision which Peter, and James, and John beheld when they looked into that Savior's face, and saw it transfigured—beams of light flashing from its every feature, and His whole person made to glow with a superhuman splendor! The favored spectator might well be content to die at that moment! It was enough to have lived to have beheld His glory so divinely revealed!

Beloved, have you not sometimes felt as I have, that you could have wished to have seen the Well-beloved's face even in its grief and agony? It was not long before the beauty of Jesus began to be marred by His inward griefs and His daily hardships; He appears to have looked like a man of 50 when He was scarcely thirty. The Jews said, "You are not yet 50 years old, and have You seen Abraham?" His visage was more marred, we are told, than that of any man, and His form more than the sons of men, for He took upon Himself our sickness,

and bore our sorrows; and all this substitutionary grief plowed deep furrows upon that blessed brow, and made the cheeks to sink, and the eyes to become red with much weeping. Yet gladly would I have gazed into the face of the Man of Sorrows! Gladly would I have seen those eyes which were "as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set." Gladly would I have seen those founts of pity, wells of love, and springs of grief! Gladly would I have adoringly admired those cheeks which were as beds of spices, as sweet flowers, and those lips like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. All the suffering that He suffered could not take away from that marred visage its majesty of grace and holiness, nor withdraw from it one whit of that mental, moral, and spiritual beauty which were peculiar to the perfect man. O how terribly lovely that beloved face must have looked when it was covered with the crimson of the bloody sweat, when the radiant hues of His rosy sufferings suffused the lily of His perfection! What a vision must that have been of the Man of Sorrows when He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death"; what must it have been to have looked into His face when His brow was girt about with the crown of thorns; when the ruby drops followed each other adown those bruised cheeks which had been spit upon by the shameful mouths of the scorners. That must have been a spectacle of woe, indeed, but perhaps, yet more ghastly still, was the face of the Redeemer when He said, "I thirst!" Or when, in bitterest anguish, He shrieked, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Then, indeed, the sun of the universe suffered a horrible eclipse! Then the light of heaven, for a while, passed under a black tempestuous cloud! That face in such a condition we have not seen, nor shall see, but beloved, we *shall see His face*.

I could have wished to have been with Mary, and the holy women, and Joseph, and Nicodemus when they took His

blessed body from the cross, and laid it in the tomb. O for one gaze into that poor pale dead face—to have seen how death looked when mirrored in that matchless clay! And to see how Jesus appeared when conquered, and yet *conquering;* vanquished and yet the victor; yielding up His body to the spoiler to be laid, for a while, in the treasure house of the tomb, and yet bursting all the bars of the spoiler's den!

But, brothers and sisters, there was a glorious change, no doubt, in the face of our Lord when it was seen by several brethren after the resurrection. It was the same face, and they knew Him to be the same Christ. Did they not put their fingers into the nail prints, and thrust their hand into His side? Did they not know Him to be veritable flesh and bone as they saw Him eat the piece of fish and honeycomb? But the face was restored to its former majesty and radiance, for I suppose it to have beamed with the dawn; flashes of that light which now flames forth from it, of which John says, "His face was as the sun shining in its strength." There were, we believe, some soft unveilings of that unexampled glory which glorified saints, day without night, are perpetually beholding in heaven. That face was for the last time seen when He ascended, and the clouds concealed Him; then, gazing downward, and scattering benedictions with both His hands, He appointed His disciples to be His witnesses, and bade them go and preach His gospel, for He would be with them always, even unto the end of the world. Such was the face of Christ on earth—and the remembrance may serve to inspire in us a holy panting after the beatific vision which the Lord has promised us, and of which we are now about to speak as the Holy Spirit may graciously give us utterance.

First, this morning I purpose, brothers and sisters, to bring before your minds the beatific vision itself—*"They shall see His face";* then secondly, we shall dwell for a moment, upon the

surpassing clearness of the vision: "They shall *see* His face"—in a sense more than usually emphatic; then thirdly, upon *the privileges, choice and precious, which are involved in the vision;* and lastly we shall have a word or two upon those favored ones who shall enjoy the sight—"*They*," and none other—*"They shall see His face."*

I. First, then, **THE BEATIFIC VISION**.

"They shall see His face." It is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there see Jesus! There will be other things to see. Who dares despise those foundations of chrysolite, and chrysoprasus, and jacinth? Who shall speak lightly of streets of glassy gold, and gates of pearl? We would not forget that we shall see angels, and seraphim, and cherubim; nor would we fail to remember that we shall see apostles, martyrs, and confessors together with those whom we have walked with, and communed with in our Lord while here below. We shall assuredly behold those of our departed kindred who sleep in Jesus, dear to us here, and dear to us still—"not lost, but gone before." But still, for all this, the main thought which we now have of heaven, and certainly the main fullness of it when we shall be there is just this—we shall see Jesus! We shall care little for any of those imaginary occupations which have such charms for a certain class of minds, that they could even find a heaven in them; I have read fanciful periods in which the writer has found celestial joys to consist in an eternal progress in the knowledge of the laws of God's universe. Such is not *my* heaven! *Knowledge* is not happiness, but on the contrary, is often an increase of sorrow.

Knowing, of itself, does not make men happy or holy; for mere knowing's sake, I would as soon not know as know, if I had my choice—better to love an ounce than to know a pound! Better a little service than much knowledge! I desire to know what God pleases to teach me, but beyond that, even ignorance

shall be my bliss! Some have talked of flitting from star to star, seeing the wonders of God throughout the universe; how He rules in this province of His wide domain; how He governs in that other region of His vast dominion. It may be so, but it would be no heaven to me! So far as I can at present judge, I would rather stay at home, and sit at the feet of Christ forever than roam over the wide creation—

"The spacious earth and spreading flood
Proclaim the wise and powerful God,
And Your rich glories from afar
Sparkle in every rolling star.
Yet in Christ's looks a glory stands,
The noblest wonder of God's hands;
He, in the person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone."

If Jesus were not infinite, we should not speak so, but since He is, in His person divine, and as to His manhood so nearly allied to us that the closest possible sympathy exists between us, there will always be fresh subjects for thought, fresh sources for enjoyment for those who are taken up with Him. Certainly, brothers and sisters, to no believer would heaven be desirable if Jesus were not there, or, if being there, they could not enjoy the nearest and dearest fellowship with Him. A sight of Him first turned our sorrow into joy; renewed communion with Him lifts us above our present cares, and strengthens us to bear our heavy burdens. What must *heavenly* communion be? When we have Christ with us, we are content with a crumb, and satisfied with a cup of water, but if His face is hidden, the whole world cannot afford a solace—we are widowed of our beloved, our sun has set, our moon is eclipsed, and our candle is blown out! Christ is all in all to us here, and therefore we pant and

long for a heaven in which He shall be all in all to us forever—and such *will* the heaven of God be! The paradise of God is not the Elysium of imagination, the Utopia of intellect, or the Eden of poetry—it is the heaven of intense *spiritual* fellowship with the Lord Jesus, a place where it is promised to faithful souls that "they shall see His face."

In the beatific vision it is Christ whom they see! And further, it is His face which they behold; they shall not see the hem of His robe as Moses saw the back parts of Jehovah; they shall not be satisfied to touch the hem of His garment, or to sit far down at His feet where they can only see His sandals—no, they "shall see His face!" By this I understand two things; first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; and secondly, that *spiritually* their mental faculties shall be enlarged so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, and soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand Him, His work, His love, as they never understood Him before. They shall literally, I say, see His face, for Christ is no phantom! And in heaven, though divine, and therefore *spiritual*, He is still a man, and therefore *material* like ourselves. The very flesh and blood that suffered upon Calvary is in heaven! The hand that was pierced with the nail, now at this moment grasps the scepter of all worlds! That very head which was bowed down with anguish, is now crowned with a royal diadem, and the face that was no marvel is the very face which beams resplendent amidst the thrones of heaven! Into that same countenance we shall be permitted to gaze. O what a sight! Roll by years! Hasten on you laggard months and days, to let us but for once behold Him—our Beloved, our hearts' care, who "redeemed us unto God by His blood." Whose we are, and whom we love with such a passionate desire, that to be in His embrace we would be satisfied to suffer 10,000 deaths. *We shall actually see Jesus!*

Yet the *spiritual* sight will be sweeter still; I think the text implies that in the next world our powers of mind will be very different from what they are now. We are, the best of us in our infancy as yet, and know but in part, but we shall be men then—we shall "put away childish things." We shall see and know even as we are known, and among the great things that we shall know will be this greatest of all—that we shall know Christ! We shall know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ that passes knowledge! O how delightful it will be then, to understand His everlasting love! How, without beginning, or ever the earth was, His thoughts darted forward towards His dear ones whom He had chosen in the sovereignty of His choice, that they should be His forever; what a subject for delightful meditation will the covenant be, and Christ's surety engagements in that covenant when He undertook to take the debts of all His people upon Himself, and to pay them all, and to stand and suffer in their place. And what thoughts shall we have then of our union with Christ—our federal, vital, conjugal oneness! We only *talk* about these things now, we do not really *understand* them; we merely plow the surface, and gather a topsoil harvest, but richer subsoil lies beneath. Brothers and sisters, in heaven we shall dive into the deepest depths of fellowship with Jesus; "We shall see His face," that is, we shall see clearly and plainly all that has to do with our Lord—and this shall be the topmost bliss of heaven.

In the blessed vision the saints see Jesus, and they see Him clearly. We may also remark that they see Him *always*, for when the text says, "They shall see His face," it implies that they never, at any time are without the sight. Never for a moment do they unlock their arm from the arm of their Beloved! They are not as we are—sometimes near the throne, and then afar off by backslidings; sometimes hot with love, and then cold with indifference; they are not as we are, sometimes bright as

seraphs, and then dull as clods, but forever and ever they are in closest association with the Master, for "they shall see His face."

Best of all, they see His face as it is now in all its glory. John tells us what that will be like. In his first chapter he says, "His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow," to mark His antiquity, for He is the Ancient of Days. "And His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength." Such is the vision which the redeemed enjoy before the throne! Their Lord is all brightness, and in Him there is nothing to weep over, nothing to mar His glory! Doubtless there are traces there, upon that wondrous face, of all the griefs He once endured, but these only make Him more glorious; He looks like a lamb that has been slain, and still wears His priesthood; but all that has to do with the shame, and the spit, and slaughter, has been so transformed that the sight is all blissful, all comforting, all glorious! In His face there is nothing to excite a tear, or to beget a sigh. I wish my lips were unloosed, and my thoughts were free, that I could tell you something more of this sight, but indeed, it is not given unto mortal tongues to talk of these things. I suppose that if we were caught up to see His face, and should come back again, yet would we have to say like Paul, that we had heard and seen that which it was not lawful for us to utter. God will not as yet reveal these things fully to us, but He reserves His best wine for the last; we can but give you a few glimpses, but O beloved, wait a little while—it shall not be long before *you* shall see His face!

II. Secondly, we turn to another thought—**THE SURPASSING CLEARNESS OF THAT VISION**. "They shall see His face." The word, "see" sounds in my ears with a clear, full, melodious note. I think we see but little here. This indeed, is not the world of sight—"we walk by faith, not by sight." Around us all is mist and cloud; what we *do* see, we see only as

if men were trees walking. If ever we get a glimpse of the spirit-world, it is like yonder momentary lightning flash in the darkness of the tempest which opens for an instant the gates of heaven, and in the twinkling of an eye they are closed again. And then the darkness is denser than before, as if it were enough for us poor mortals to know that there is a brightness denied to us as yet.

The saints see the face of Jesus in heaven because they are purified from sin. The pure in heart are blessed, they shall see God, and none others. It is because of our impurity which still remains, that we cannot as yet see His face, but *their* eyes are touched with eye salve, and therefore they see. Ah, brothers and sisters, how often does our Lord Jesus hide Himself behind the clouds of dust which we ourselves make by our unholy walking! If we become proud, or selfish, or slothful, or fall into any other of our besetting sins, then our eyes lose their capacity to behold the brightness of our Lord. But up yonder they not only do not sin, but they *cannot* sin; they are not tempted, for there is no space for the tempter to work upon, even could he be admitted to try them. They are without fault before the throne of God, and surely this alone is a heaven—to be rid of inbred sin, and the plague of the heart, and to have ended forever, the struggle of spiritual life, the crushing of the fleshly power of death! They may well see His face when the scales of sin have been taken from their eyes, and they have become pure as God Himself is pure!

They surely see His face more clearly, because all the clouds of care are gone from them. Some of you, while sitting here today, have been trying to lift up your minds to heavenly contemplation, but you cannot; the business has gone so wrong this week; the children have vexed you so much; sickness has been in the house so sorely; you feel in your body you are quite out of order for devotion—these enemies break your

concentration. Now *they* are vexed by none of these things in heaven, and therefore they can see their Master's face! They are not cumbered with Martha's cares; they still occupy Mary's seat at His feet. When you and I have laid aside the farm, and the merchandise, and the marrying, and the burying which come so fast upon each other's heels, we shall then, be forever with the Lord—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in"!

Moreover, as they have done with sins and cares, so have they done with sorrows. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." We are none of us quite strangers to grief, and with some of us pain is an inseparable companion—we still dwell in the smoky tents of Kedar. Perhaps it is well that we should be so tried while we are here, for sanctified sorrow refines the soul, but in glory there is no affliction, for pure gold needs not the furnace. Well may they then, behold Christ when there are no tears to dim their eyes, no smoke of this world to rise up between them and their beloved—they are alike, free from sin, and care, and sorrow! They see His face right gloriously in that cloudless atmosphere and in the light which He Himself supplies.

Moreover, the glorified see His face the more clearly because there are no idols to stand between Him and them. Our idolatrous love of worldly things is a chief cause of our knowing so little of spiritual things; because we love this and that so much, we see little of Christ. You cannot fill your life cup from the pools of earth, and yet have room in it for the crystal streams of heaven; but they have no idols there—nothing to occupy the heart, no rival for the Lord Jesus. He

reigns supreme within their spirits, and therefore they see His face.

They have no veils of ignorance or prejudice to darken their sight in heaven. Those of us who most candidly endeavor to learn the truth of God, are nevertheless in some degree biased and warped by education. Let us struggle as we may, yet still our surroundings will not permit us to see things as they are. There is a deflection in our vision, refraction in the air, a something everywhere which casts the beam of light out of its straight line, so that we see the *appearance* rather than the *reality* of the truth of God. We see not with open sight; our vision is marred. But up yonder, among the golden harps, they "know, even as they are known." They have no prejudices, but a full desire to know the truth—the bias is gone, and therefore they are able to see His face. O blessed thought! One could almost wish to sit down and say no more, but just roll that sweet morsel under one's tongue, and extract the essence and sweetness of it! "They see His face." There is no long distance for the eye to travel over, for they are near Him, they are in His bosom, they are sitting on His throne at His right hand. No withdrawals there to mourn over—their sun shall no more go down! Here He stands behind our wall; He shows Himself through the lattices, but He hides not Himself in heaven! O when shall the long summer days of glory be ours and Jesus our undying Joy forever and ever? In heaven they never pray—

"Oh may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide You from Your servant's eyes,"

but forever and forever they bask in the sunlight, or rather, like Milton's angel, they live in the sun itself! They come not to the sea's brink to wade into it up to their ankles, but they swim in bliss forever! In waves of everlasting rest, in richest, closest

fellowship with Jesus, they display themselves with ineffable delight!

III. The third part of the subject which commands our attention this morning is **THE MATCHLESS PRIVILEGE WHICH THIS VISION INVOLVES**.

We may understand the words, *"they shall see His face,"* to contain five things. They mean, first, certain Salvation. The face of Jesus Christ acts in two ways upon the sons of men; with some it is a face of terror—"Before His face heaven and earth fled away." It is written concerning Him, "Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap." A sight of Christ's face will be, to the *ungodly*, eternal absence from the Presence of the Lord! But if there are some men who shall see His face; who shall sit down and delight themselves in gazing upon the face of the great Judge upon the throne, then those persons are assuredly saved! They are awaiting the day of His coming; they are dwelling with the eternal flame without being consumed; they are resting on the bosom of our God who is a consuming fire; and yet, like the burning bush of old, though glowing with the glory, they are not consumed by the heat. O happy men who can live where others must expire—who can find their heaven where a carnal world must eternally find its hell! This is the first thing in the text. "They shall see His face"—*then they are everlastingly safe.*

The second privilege is they shall have a clear *knowledge of Him.* I have dwelt upon that thought before, and merely mention it to complete the summary. To look into the face of Christ signifies to be well acquainted with His person, His office, His character, His work. So the saints in heaven shall have more knowledge of Christ than the most advanced below. As one has said, the babe in Christ admitted to heaven discovers more of Christ in a single hour than is known by all

the divines of the assemblies of the church on earth. O yes, our catechisms and our creeds, and even our Bible—all these reveal but very little of what we shall discover when we shall see His face! Our text also implies *conscious favor*. Was not that the old benediction, "The Lord lift up His countenance upon you"? He *has* lifted it up upon the *glorified*, and they see it world without end! Here it is our joy of joys to have the Lord smiling upon us, for if He is with us, who can be against us? If we know that He loves us, and that He delights in us, it matters not to us though earth and hell should hate us, and men cast out our names as evil. In heaven then, they have this to be their choice privilege; they are courtiers who stand always in the Monarch's palace, secure of the monarch's smile; they are children who live unbrokenly in their father's love, and know it, and rejoice to know it evermore!

The fourth privilege involved in the text is that of *close fellowship*. They are always near to Jesus; they are never *hoping* that they are with Him, and yet fearing that they are not; they have none of those inward struggles which make life so unhappy for some of us; they never say—

"'Tis a point I long to know."

They see His face, and are in hourly communion with their Lord. Perfect spirits are always walking with the Lord, for they are always agreed with Him. In glory they are all Enochs, walking with God. There, forever and forever they lie in the bosom of Jesus, in the nearest possible place of communion with Him who redeemed them with His blood. And this involves a fifth privilege, namely, *complete transformation*. "They shall be like He, for they shall see Him as He is." If they see His face, they shall be "changed from glory to glory" by this face to face vision of the Lord. Beholding Christ, His likeness

is photographed upon them—they become in all respects like He as they gaze upon Him world without end!

Thus have I very briefly mentioned the privileges involved in seeing Christ face to face.

IV. We must conclude by noting **WHO THEY ARE TO WHOM THIS CHOICE GIFT IS AFFORDED BY DIVINE MERCY**. "They shall see His face." Who are *they?* They are all His elect, all His redeemed, all His effectually called, all the justified, all the sanctified. They are the tens of thousands, and myriads who have died in Jesus, of whom the Spirit says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Thank God we are not strangers to those who now behold His face! As we look back to the associations of our youth, and to the friendships of our manhood, we remember many whose privilege it has been to precede us, and to know long before us the things which we desire, and expect so soon to learn. Some are taken away to see His face while yet young; we bless God that our babes shall have the same heaven as our holy parents—they shall not be placed in the back settlements of Canaan, but they shall with equal clearness, see the face of Jesus! Those dear boys and girls who learned to love Christ, and made a profession of His name in their youth; who were never spared to reach the ripeness of manhood and womanhood, they shall equally see His face with the gravest and most reverend fathers of the church! I read of no secondary joys. Whoever may have invented the doctrine of degrees in heaven I do not know, but I believe there is as much foundation for it in Scripture as there is for the doctrine of "purgatory," and no more! All the saints shall see their Master's face; the thief dying on the cross was with Christ in paradise, and Paul could be no more! I sometimes like to think of heaven in the same way as old Ryland did when he wrote his rhyming letter from Northampton—

"They all shall be there,
The great and the small:
For I shall shake hands
With the blessed St. Paul."

Doubtless we all shall; whether dying young or old, whether departing after long service to Christ, or dying immediately after conversion as the thief, of all the saints shall it be said in the words of the text, "They shall see His face." What more can apostles and martyrs enjoy?

Do you regret that your friends have departed? Do you lament that wife, and husband, and child, and father, and grandparents have all entered into their rest? Be not so unkind, so selfish to yourself, so cruel to them! No, rather, soldier of the cross, be thankful that another has won the crown before you, and you press forward to win it, too. Life is but a moment—how short it will appear in eternity! Even here hope perceives it to be brief, and though impatience counts it long, yet faith corrects her, and reminds her that one hour with God will make the longest life to seem but a point of time, a mere *nothing*, a watch in the night, a thing that was, and was not, that has come and gone!

So we will close our sermon by observing that they who see His face already make only a part of the great "they" who shall see His face—for many of us here below are on the way to the same reward! As many as have felt the burden of sin, and have come to the foot of the cross, and looked to those five crimson founts—the wounds of Jesus; as many as can say, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire"; as many as can serve Him feeling that for them to live is Christ; as many as shall fight, day by day, against sin, and shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb; as many as by the eternal Spirit's power, shall be kept by faith unto salvation—they shall all see His face! It is mine to

hope to see it, and it is yours, too, beloved, and the hope shall not be disappointed! It makes not ashamed! We shall see His face, and that vision shall yield us perfect bliss!

Yet I fear my text is not true of all here assembled. Just this word for the unconverted—I am afraid you may almost say with Balaam, "I shall see Him but not now; I shall behold Him, but not near," for every eye *shall* see Him, and they, also, which crucified Him—and what will *they* say when they see Him? These ungodly ones—what will *they* do? They shall cry to the rocks, "Hide us!" And to the mountains, "Cover us from the face of Him who sits on the throne." Ah, my dear hearer, what a dreadful thing it will be if that very face which is the heaven of your mother, and the heaven of your husband, or the heaven of your wife, and of your child, should be the hell to *you* from which you shall desire to be *hidden!* Now it will be the case unless first of all, you seek His face on earth. Certain Greeks said to the disciples, "Sir, we would see Jesus." I wish *you* had that same desire this morning in a *spiritual* sense, for He Himself has said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." If you see Him now by simple faith, as your Savior, you shall see Him at the last as your King, your Friend, your Beloved! But you must first see Him to trust Him *here,* or you shall not see Him to rejoice in Him hereafter—

"You sinners, seek His face,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there."

May God, even our own God, bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

825 THE SIEVE – AMOS 9:9

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 16th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." — Amos 9:9

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Amos 9]

"I WILL COMMAND, and I will sift"—how easily the divine purposes become facts! The Lord has but to command, and His will is done. Omnipotence has servants everywhere; if those who serve Jehovah cheerfully shall not suffice to carry out His will, the very devils themselves, and the most rebellious of spirits shall be chained to the chariot of His divine decree, and made to effect His designs—

"When God commands, who dares oppose,
Or ask Him why, or what He does?"

And if they in their impudent obstinacy should oppose, their opposition is made to subserve the very purpose which it was designed to thwart! And all their raving, and their raging, their rebellion, and their struggles merge into a wonderful adherence to the eternal plan by which divine wisdom and grace shall be displayed. We are led to make that remark by the

text opening thus—"I will command, and I will sift"; as if the mere command were enough to effect the sifting; God has but to *speak,* and it is done! And at His will His children shall be chastened with innumerable trials, or delivered in abundant mercies; the rills of comfort, and the streams of woe alike flow at His bidding, or at His word are dried up.

This prophecy is no doubt originally applicable to the long-afflicted seed of Israel, and how terribly has it been fulfilled! Have not the sons of Jacob been sifted among all nations? They have been removed to and fro as a shepherd's tent; they have known no abiding dwelling place; since the day when in answer to their cry, "His blood be on us, and on our children," the firebrand of the Roman soldier set their temple on a blaze, and the plow of the Roman conqueror went over the bloodstained foundations of the beloved city; since that day they have been a nation scattered and peeled; sons of the weary foot, a nation without a land, a people without a language. The sufferings of the Jews are almost unparalleled; from the time of the famous siege of Jerusalem, down to days almost within memory, they have been a proscribed and persecuted people. Their name has been a word of scorn, and their race a byword and a proverb. In almost every land they have been hunted like the partridges upon the mountain—he that killed them thought he did God service. The followers of that greatest of Jews, the meek and lowly Jesus, thought they displayed their Christianity by hounding to the death His brethren according to the flesh. Perhaps no chapter in human history shows more how near akin man may be to a devil than the history of the Jews in Spain. But why instance one nation—all have been barbarous and inhuman. England had her share in their murder. As a frugal and industrious people they have flourished wherever they have been allowed to trade, but their wealth has been extorted from them by greedy monarchs, or destroyed by lawless mobs;

for them there were no laws except such as are made for the destruction of wolves and foxes; they could never be sure of life or limb. To mock them was the sport of children; to torture them was the amusement of kings and princes. Alas, poor Israel, what have you not suffered? What woes have been made to roll in billows over you? Nation of God's election, yet to be restored to joy, for whom a glorious future is certainly ordained, how have you been trod as the mire in the street. The precious sons of God, comparable unto fine gold, how have they been esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter; Israel has forgotten her God, and rejected her King, the Son of David, the crucified Jesus, and therefore long days of bitterness, and centuries of grief have been appointed her. O God, how long? When will You return, and bid Judah's Lion-standard once more wave in triumph? When shall the throne be restored unto Jerusalem, and the kingdom unto Judah? When shall the long-expected Messiah set up the kingdom which shall endure forever?

I intend this morning, not to discuss those matters, but to take the text as it applies to the *spiritual* Israel. Undoubtedly all these prophecies have a double teaching, and while it is atrocious to overlook the literal meaning, and a despite to the Spirit of God to read literal passages as though they were altogether spiritual and figurative, yet after having once stated the literal meaning, we are allowed to go on in the way of teaching, to the spiritual sense, as we shall now do, as far as the Spirit of all grace shall assist us. Two things there are in the text for God's people to remember—*the sifting and the saving.* We shall be sifted, each of us, yet shall not the least grain fall to the ground; tried much, but never forsaken, often near to death, but never allowed to perish.

I. Let us begin with **THE SIFTING**. God has ordained that this side of the Jordan there shall be no rest for His people as

to their outward circumstances. The covenant of grace has for one of its clauses, "In the world you shall have tribulation." As long as the wheat lies on the threshing floor, the flail must be kept in motion, and as long as the corn-heap of the church is a mingled mass of chaff and wheat, the winnowing fan must not be laid aside. The church of God since its institution, has never been perfectly pure. It has been the object of all true ministers, as the Lord's watchmen, to keep His church pure; and the servants of God in every age have longed and desired that the tares might be rooted up from among the wheat, but it has never been so. The church has shared in the imperfection of everything else that is human, and therefore, upon God's floor there has never been a heap of perfectly pure, well-winnowed wheat—some chaff has always been introduced by some means or other. No matter how stringent your regulations, how Scriptural your rules, how judicious your officers, how precise your examinations, for all that, as certainly as Judas thrust himself in among the Twelve, so will there creep in unawares among us ungodly men who were of old ordained unto this condemnation, who shall be as chaff in the midst of the wheat. Because of this we must expect, wherever and whenever God has a church, to find that it is in the sieve. As long as the farmer's corn is not clean, he will keep on sifting it; and as long as God's church is not pure, He will continue to purify it. He will, in fact, fulfill the words of the text, "Sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve."

Now take this great fact in reference to the church at large, and you will see it worked out in her history. No sooner had the Lord a church after the time of His ascension, and that church had begun to multiply through the Pentecostal blessing, than Herod rose up, and strong-handed tyrant as he was, took the sieve, and sifted the church most terribly—till the saints of God were scattered, and many of them slain. Persecution set in

as soon as the church appeared—the man-child was scarcely born into the world before the dragon began to pour forth floods out of his mouth, hoping that he might utterly drown the woman's seed. From that first day until now, the page of history is crimson with the blood of the faithful! Notice the persecutions by the Pagan emperor; through what seas of blood the church swam in those cruel days. What horrors make the flesh to creep as we turn to Papal times! Surely the blood of saints shed for the testimony of Jesus might have filled the Mediterranean to its brim. I know not whether every drop of the Atlantic Ocean might not have been colored red if the warm blood of all the martyrs had been poured into its all but boundless deeps. So many were the saints of God that were offered, that arithmetic can scarcely compute their number, and time would fail us to narrate their torments and their triumphs. The church was sifted by these persecutions; the vain and light, the formal and the insincere went off from her, too glad to earn inglorious safety by dastardly apostasy; they could not afford to lose their lives for the truth of God's sake; the cross was too heavy for their galled shoulders, and they turned aside—yet not the least true grain fell to the ground! The church was never the worst for her fiercest persecution, in fact, she seemed to derive new vigor from her baptism of blood, and her voice was never so piercing, and so potent as when it was uplifted from the rack and the stake; her soldiers never fought as well as when the martyr's ruby crown hung visibly before their eyes! Sifted she has been, but never injured; she has been a grand gainer through the grace of God by all her tribulations and afflictions. Brothers and sisters, we need not suppose that the sacramental host of God's elect has come to the end of persecution! We may have done so in this country; I cannot tell. This I know, I would not aid in maintaining an unjust law to escape from persecution; I would not deny to the Roman Catholic his

natural rights though I thought he would burn me and my fellow believers as soon as he had the power; I would do him no wrong under the pretext of preventing him from doing a wrong to me; God forbid that we should do evil that good may come! True Protestantism does not live upon political favoritism or national supremacy; the truth of God can afford to let justice be done, for she knows that the right can never hurt her. We who worship Jesus in spirit can afford to do what is right, and let consequences take care of themselves. My brothers and sisters, let the worst come—let violence again assail us—we have overcome in days gone by, and can overcome again! Weak and feeble as we are today, when filled by the Holy Spirit we shall be strong, and shall form a fresh band of martyrs to illustrate the faithfulness of God again; but we cannot, we *cannot* do violence to our consciences and the rights of other men, even though it is to save our lives and preserve our liberties.

Other sieves beside persecution have been used. Not long after the days of the apostles, yes, even in their days, God was sifting His church in the sieve of *heresy*. There arose men who taught contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus; they were cunning and smooth-spoken men who, by sleight of words and craftiness of argument, led aside many, and perverted the faith of not a few. Ever since those times, notorious heresies have at various seasons afflicted the church like epidemics among sheep—deadly and hard to cure. Professors have fallen before the hurricane of false doctrine like leaves in autumn; thick as leaves in Vallambrosa have been the apostates who have been hurried here and there by the fitful winds of novel opinions, subtle refining, and pestilent errors! Denying the Lord that bought them, denying the cardinal doctrines of the faith, they have perished in their iniquity! Doubtless the uprising of false doctrine is intended by God to be a test to the professing

church. While men hear the truth of God, and nothing but the truth of God, and it is the fashion to avow it, who shall judge between the pretended and the real? But when a strong party is made for error, then some son of Levi lifts up the banner of separation, and cries, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me!" Then straightaway there is a division in the camp, and it becomes known who has the truth of God written in his heart, and who has it merely on his tongue; by the fierce blasts of false teaching, which are apparently so injurious, a difference is made between the rotten boughs which only adhere to the tree from force of habit, and the living boughs which keep their hold because they suck their vital sap from the stem. We need not fear if even worse heresies should arise in these times than in the past, for God will defeat them! It seems to me very likely that Antichrist has yet more deceptive inventions to reveal—we have not yet fathomed all the depths of Satan. Puseyism, with its many attractions, is about as cunning a device as we could well imagine; it has outdone Rome itself, in some respects! But yet there may be worse to come; if so, so be it, for God will overrule it for good. These devices of men, and doctrines of devils are only so many sieves by which the Lord will separate the chaff from the wheat, and make it to be known who are His elect and who are not.

So too, *the uprising of new infidelities* are intended to act as a test to the church. At different times the public mind exhibits a stronger tendency towards unbelief; one wave rolls up black with superstition, and the next is pale with infidelity; the mind of man oscillates like a pendulum between believing a lie, and believing nothing; frequently the church is assailed by a crafty philosophy, and then by a brutal ignorance. Every truth which she declares is exposed to the most violent, and even ferocious assaults; she has been assailed from all quarters, and at all points; in modern times she has been peculiarly attacked by criticism

upon her Bible, which she upholds as the revealed will of God. Men have even been found calling themselves bishops and presbyters of the church who have sought to undermine the foundations of the gospel by impugning the truthfulness of the word of God! This is no strange thing—it is but an old device. Those who have read the history of the church from the very beginning will remember how she had to contend with Atheism, Deism, Arianism, and all shapes and forms of doubts and skepticism in her earliest days. This is no new conflict, O soldiers of the cross—neither is it one concerning which you have any ground for alarm! We have overcome Atheism in the past, and we shall vanquish it in the future; there will be *benefit* reaped by the church from skeptical attacks, and certainly no detriment shall accrue to her; she will come out of her trial, however fiery, like gold seven times purified. She shall shine with a clearer luster because of the ordeals which she has triumphantly endured.

I will mention one more sieve in which the church at large has been tested. It is that of providential examination by public opinion, and sense of justice. You must never expect that any professing church of God will be for a long time flourishing, if it abides exactly in the same state. Whenever our churches run for years in the same rut, little good is done; to many of our old established Baptist churches it would be the greatest possible blessing if the chapel were burnt down, or if some disorderly zealot would break all their proprieties to shivers—anything to break the deadly stagnation under which they wither! As it is in small churches, so it is in the church at large—change and stir are necessary! We must expect to often hear that the ship of Christ's church is in a storm; there must not be smooth sailing for the vessel of the church; it must be tossed with tempest, and driven to and fro. At the present juncture all established churches are in the sieve; I believe there is much good corn in

the established church, though intermixed with a sad amount of chaff—and now the whole is being sifted and *will be sifted* yet more and more. I do not care who holds the sieve—whether it is a politician or an ecclesiastic, I am persuaded that by God's grace good will come of all this strife, and debate, and agitation. The public mind, when it stirs itself about religion, is often mysteriously guided to the right path; and even if it chooses a wrong thing for a season, yet the wrong only plays itself out, and the right, by-and-by, comes to the fore, and wins the victory. God will not have His church in alliance with the state! And though they settle down upon their lees, and are at quiet in an adulterous connection with the powers that be—*the trying time must come,* and the sieve must be used. The true friends of the church need not wish for the sifting to be withheld, for not one grain of precious truth will fall to the ground! All that will perish will be the *chaff*, which is a signal blessing to lose; purification will be the result of agitation. After the Episcopal Church is sifted, other churches will endure the same; all must take their turn—and those churches which have any mixture of tradition or man's teaching, those churches which depart in anything from this book will lose much by the sifting that they now hold to be precious. And a blessed loss it will be to them! We, as a denomination, shall have our sifting too; how shall we come forth from it? It may not come yet, but the ordeal is surely ordained for us; perhaps we shall rebel terribly at the trial of cherished prejudices, but our rebellion will be in vain. As long as the divine will shall be accomplished, what does it matter? Let us be content to abide what the Lord has appointed—

> "Let sects, and names, and parties fall,
> And Jesus Christ be all in all."

Let every turret of ecclesiastical citadels be cast down, however venerated they may be, if they are not of the Lord! Let every graceful pile, though hallowed with the moss of ages, be hurled down, and not one stone left upon another if it is not of the Lord's building! Lord, send through the camp Your sharp two-edged sword to kill error everywhere! Search us with candles, and try us as the refiner tries his gold till You have consumed every false thing and made Your people to be a Scriptural church, a pure church, a living and perfect church, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners! Thus far we have spoken of the church of God at large, but other matters call us onward.

God's truths are like crystals which bear one uniform shape whether in larger masses or broken into fragments. Take, too, the great truth of God that the whole church shall be winnowed, and as you break it up, you will see that each church, and each individual *Christian* must be sifted, too. The Lord will sift *all* His people—sift them most thoroughly, and in all respects.

Let us think of certain of the sieves in which you and I shall be tried. One is *the preaching of the word.* Wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully preached, it acts as a discerner of spirits. There are certain searching and testing truths taught in God's word, which when spoken in plainness and distinctness, cause mere professors to be angry, and voluntarily to withdraw themselves. This is the design of such truths, that the vile may be separated from the precious. You remember when our Lord stated a certain doctrine, it is said that certain of them walked no more with Him? It was not that He had done anything evil, or laid any hard duty upon them, but He had simply stated a deep truth of God; He had gone a little beyond His ordinary teaching, and at this deep truth they were straightaway scandalized, and walked no more with Him. So in the preaching of the gospel—if the minister declares the whole truth of God,

certain persons will say, "I cannot receive that"—not because it is not Scriptural, but because it does not jump with their prejudices, or suit their carnal tastes. Now, when such people go away, we have no cause to mourn except that they should be so foolish! Our cause is rather for rejoicing that God has made His word to answer what always was its purpose—the separating of the precious from the vile. The gospel is like a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; it is intended to cut between the joints and the marrow, and to lay bare the very heart of man! I would hate to come into this pulpit, and utter words which should be needlessly offensive, but I do delight to preach the gospel that the word shall find you out, and make you perceive that we are speaking of you! Every true preacher of the gospel will be sure to become a spiritual detective; he may not know anything of his hearers, but in the course of his ministry he will speak as if he had entered into the very chambers of their heart, and read the secrets of their soul! There are some who do not like close dealings, though that seems to *me* to be the very ministry every Christian ought to prefer—a heart-searching, heart-trying ministry. But to many, plain preaching is very distasteful; they want to be patted on the back, and praised, and extolled; they like to have human nature lifted on high, and have sweet things said unto them; they are like those of old who said to the prophets, "prophesy smooth things unto us." But the genuine gospel, wherever it comes with God's *power,* acts like a sieve, for vain and foolish people are offended at that which searches and tries them, and so they fall to the ground with the chaff—while the precious wheat, under such a ministry, remains to the glory of God! I have known some young ministers dreadfully alarmed because a few of their hearers have been indignant and threatened to withdraw when they have preached the doctrines of grace; this is the natural result of a faithful ministry; why then,

be alarmed? No, let the chaff blow away! If God's gospel offends any man, let him be offended! Or, rather, let divine grace come and change his heart until he shall yield to it, for the word of God cannot yield to him.

But, brothers and sisters, we shall have severer tests than these; every professing child of God will be tested by temptation. You think young disciple, that you shall never fall; you do not know what traps there are, what pitfalls, what slippery places, and how soon you may be taken in them. She who lies in your bosom may lead you into sin; he who has been your instructor from your youth up may be your Ahithophel, and entrap you by his subtlety. You cannot tell where you shall meet your foe, but conclude that behind every bush there is an enemy, and underneath every tuft of grass a viper. It is very easy for us, at first conversion, to think that we have overcome our sins, and to imagine that they are dead and buried, but how soon we find that they are yet alive to be our pest and plague, and to keep up a constant warfare in our soul. Brothers and sisters, tens of thousands of fair vessels have floated from the docks, and have passed down the river with every color flying, receiving every man's good word, freighted with hope, and manned with resolution, and yet they have been wrecked most hopelessly! A shifting quicksand, or a hidden rock has been their destroyer, and they have been heard of no more in the regions of the good. So may it be with you, young professor; tempted in the one point which you have left unguarded, the enemy may attack you at the post at which you have set no watchman, and you may fall a prey, even *you* who thought yourself so sure! The daily temptations of the shop, the house, the field, the street, yes, even of the church of God, are the discoverers of sincerity, the detectives of delusion, the exposers of hypocrisy, and the beacons of wisdom.

Next to these come *the trials of life*. Believe me, these are severe enough for any of us—to some they are crushing! But to all, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. There are temptations in prosperity; that is a sieve which few men can pass; as the refining pot for silver and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise; many men can bear to be censured who cannot endure to be praised. Where one man has been ruined by adversity, 10,000 men have been destroyed by prosperity. Do we not see it? When men get into that sieve and become rich, they cannot attend the little meeting house they once attended; they are too big for their former brothers and sisters; they go off to some other religion that shall be more fashionable, and they forsake the simple faith of their fathers and the truth of God. The men who in their prosperity ought to be pillars in God's church, become the fiercest of her foes. Who are those most bitter against the truth of God but the sons of men who held it, but having grown rich, have despised their fathers' faith, and their fathers' God, and have gone over to the adversary! Few men can endure long-continued, undisturbed prosperity; Capuan holidays ruined Hannibal's troops; and in the luxurious ease of the valleys, men degenerate; but among the mountains we find a brave and hardy race, for there the dangers of the crags, and the cold of winter brace nerve and muscle till each becomes vigorous, and men are fit for acts of valor and deeds of heroism. It is in battle and service that veteran soldiers are bred! There is a sieve, then, in prosperity. And *adversity* acts in the same sifting manner; I know it has acted so in this church—some who were fervent among us are gone forth from us, because they have not prospered in the world as they wished, and have been unable to endure the pinches of need; therefore they have drifted into wrong courses, and doubtful dealings, and they are ashamed to show their faces among the people of God. Lord, deliver us from being filled

with riches or stinted by poverty; from either extreme, save us! The prayer of Agur is a most wise one: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Whether rich or poor, we must look upon our condition as being a test by which God would make known to us, and to His church whether we are solidly in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit, or only superficial professors—having a name to live, but we are dead.

Other tests, dear brothers and sisters, that the Lord uses, are *inward conflicts.* Of these I have no doubt many of you are well aware. Ah, there are times with us when everything in us is salted with fire, and weighed in the balances; we speak pretty boldly sometimes, but there are seasons when we cannot speak at all for very trembling of heart. Were it not for the infinite mercy of God, we would then give up all, sealing our own doom with the black seal of despair! The Lord sets a testing time for everything in the Christian; He does not let any part of him escape the proof-house; his *faith* is tested—he thought he did believe in God, but when wave upon wave rolls over him, till all God's billows have passed over his head, he half suspects that he never knew what faith was; and if at such an hour he had not living and real faith, he would utterly perish as wax melts in the fire! And our *experiences!* Why it often happens to me that every experience I have ever enjoyed of divine love and faithfulness is veiled in a cloud—and I fear lest it should have been all a delusion! I look back upon it all, and tremble lest I should have deceived myself; I ask whether such divine grace could have been shown to such a sinner! Most men's experience, when it is put into the sieve, comes out very much less showy than when it went in. We thought, we thought that we had experienced the deep things of the Spirit, but we found when we came to search, that we had heaped up much borrowed experience, many stolen plumes, and feathers plucked from others' wings! Our *good resolutions*—how they

shrivel when they are put into the sieve! "Lord, I will never deny You," said Peter, but when the cock had crowed, where was Peter's steadfastness? When the soul is bruised and broken under a sense of past sins; when it is crushed and beaten small under a consciousness of present departure from God by unbelief, or the neglect of private prayer, or other spiritual mischiefs, then Satan will come in, and tell us that God has forsaken us, and He will be gracious no more; and he will shoot his fiery darts with such accuracy and skill, that he will stick us all over in every part of our spiritual man with his fiery suggestions! Ah, *then* you will find out whether grace within is real, or whether your love and faith are false and feigned. At such times, much tinsel and gilt are crumpled up by the heat, and we find that much of our spiritual beauty was but skin deep. Beloved, the most real thing about us is our *sinnership*, and I trust our simple child-like dependence upon Jesus—

"I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

Let me sing that from my heart, and there is no sham in the song. You will have to be emptied of every particle and portion of self-righteousness, and come to Jesus just as empty and vile as you did at the first—to throw yourself at His dear, bleeding feet, and find that *His fullness,* and *your emptiness* are the two most real things in all the world—

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all."

All experience beyond this is but a flower, and may wither, but this is the root that abides—all else is but as grass that springs up in its season, fair and verdant, but is soon scorched

in the summer's drought. This is the eternal foundation which cannot be moved or shaken, world without end—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and, "whoever believes in Him shall never perish, but shall have eternal life." How often when sifted do we come to this as our ultimate resource? And indeed, it is a blessed thing to come here, and to remain here, and never to go beyond it, but abide forever in that precious truth, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Then can we bless the sifting, and admire the love which ordained it.

There will come other siftings beside these. The *hour of death* has often served as a touchstone by which formality has been revealed; men have felt the mask rudely plucked off when lying at death's gate; they have been compelled to see the leprosy in their brow which they had feared to think upon before; they have discovered then, the foul and reeking pollution concealed within their hearts which before they had filmed over with religious duties, and virtues, and professions. Sepulcher light is brighter than we think—the dying bed is a great revealer of secrets.

And what a test the *Day of Judgment* will be! Ah, speak of this with bated breath, and speak of it with a broken heart, those scales in which we must all be placed! Shall it be said, "*Mene, Mene, Tekel*, you are weighed in the balances, and found wanting"? Or shall we be accepted in the Beloved? There will be no escaping that last dread ordeal; nor will there be any deceiving the infallible Judge! How will it go with you, professor? Soaring professor, if your wings are not your own, the sun will melt the wax, and you will fall to your destruction! Gifted professor, think not your gifts can help you, for only divine grace, not gifts, shall stand you in that last sifting when Jesus shall divide the righteous from the wicked. We may have preached in the pulpit, or taught in the Sunday school; we may

have been deacons or elders; we may have sat at the Lord's Table, and eaten and drunk with His people; we may have been baptized, and received into the church; we may have been the loudest and busiest talkers in the courts of the Lord, but we shall be cast away forever unless we have a new heart and a right spirit—unless an Effectual work of the *Holy Spirit* shall have been worked in us, bringing us away from ourselves and all other dependences, to the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world! God grant that you and I may stand this test at the last; but in order to do so, we must stand these *present* tests—we must be steadfast and unmovable, and having done all, we must still stand steadfast in the truth of Christ. Thus have I very feebly, brought before you the *fact* of the sifting.

II. Let us now turn to **THE SAVING**—a few comforting words.

Sifting is very far from being a pleasant experience for the wheat. Look into the sieve for a minute— the grain lies still, and begins to make acquaintance with the chaff and the wheat around it; but lo, it is tossed aloft, and all its associations broken. It mounts for a while, but falls again to the bottom, not to rest, but to be continually tossed about. In the sieve the grain has no peace, and so may believers sing—

"We've no abiding city here."

This is not your rest; you must not expect continuance on this revolving orb; you had at one time a delightful family circle round about you; it is broken up now—husband gone, friends gone, old associates gone. You who have your families around you now must look upon them as only loaned to you for a time—you are in the *sieve,* remember, and nothing is stable. Never whisper, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be

moved"; no one talks like that but a mistaken one! You will be moved soon, for you are in the sieve. Yes, and you may have had many trials and changes, and been tossed from America to Australia, and from Australia to England, and back again to the Continent. You may have been tossed from house to house, from riches to poverty, from "pillar to post," as we say, but the tossing is not over yet; there is more to come. Here is the matter that makes calamity of so long a life, that we get not to the end of the sifting till we come to our graves; we are still tossed up and down, still being forever molested and disturbed in our earthly circumstances; but here arises the comfort—we are assured that no *anger* occasions our being put into the sieve. The farmer does not sift his wheat because he dislikes it, but just the opposite—he sifts it because it is precious. And you, child of God, your trials and changes, and constant catastrophes and afflictions, are no proofs of lack of affection on the part of the Most High, but the very contrary. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." It is because you are gold, that you are in the crucible, and it is because you are wheat, you are put into the sieve! Another man might have been much happier, and more peaceful than you as far as outward circumstances; I say not that he could have had a *real* peace like yours which you possess within your heart, that is a different matter; but another man might have had eyes standing out with fatness, possessing more than heart could wish; he might have spread himself like a green bay tree, being prosperous in life, and having no bands in death. Whereas you, as one of God's people, are often chastened, afflicted, tried, and troubled; well, so it must be, but you must reflect that there is great wrath in God's *apparent* mercy to the wicked—God is but fattening them like cattle for the slaughter! But as for you, there is no divine wrath in your tribulation; it is all sent in His love; His love is in every loss,

every bereavement, every bodily pain. Love, love, love, nothing but love, even when the cup is bitterest!

There is also another thought that may cheer you—it cannot be the purpose of the farmer to *destroy* the grain when he puts it into the sieve. I never heard of any farmer doing so. If he meant to burn it, or let it rot, he would not take the trouble to sift it—it cannot be his intention to destroy it if he sifts it. And so, you poor, timid believer, the Lord does not intend to destroy you by these trials. He has said, "I will not break the bruised reed." He may bruise it, but not break it. "I will not quench the smoking flax." He will chasten, but not destroy. He will bring you low, but He will yet appear for your deliverance, and lift you up. If the Lord had meant to destroy you, He would have left you in your prosperity to run deeper into sin; He would have allowed you to become rotten with pride, or polluted with base passion to your destruction. No, it is because there is a need for it that He prunes the tree that He loves so well—purging it, that it may bring forth more fruit, and that He may have the glory of it. I think I see you, poor believer, tossed about like that wheat, up and down, right and left, in the sieve, and in the air never resting; perhaps it is suggested to you, "God is very angry with me." No, the farmer is not angry with his wheat when he casts it up and down in the sieve, and neither is God angry with you! This you shall see one day, when the light shall show that *love* ruled in all your griefs.

Then comes the promise, "There shall not the least grain fall to the ground." And why is this? It is a great wonder that when sifted so much, not *one* grain falls. I suppose he who usually handles the sieve, now and then, lets a little grain fall under foot, but God says that not even yonder small shriveled grain shall perish! He says that half-developed grain shall not fall the very least shall be preserved, and kept from falling with the chaff. And why? It may be replied that the Lord's people

are preserved in some degree by their intrinsic weight, because the Holy Spirit gives them substance and solidity. The Holy Spirit has put into every believer a life that *cannot* die, making him a living and incorruptible seed that lives forever! The wind which sweeps away another man like chaff cannot remove the believer, because he is solid grain. Where the Lord God Himself dwells, there is a power to resist temptation, even such temptations as apart from that power would be our destruction. But the great defense of God's people lies in this, that He who holds the sieve watches with an observant eye, and acts with unlimited power; He sees that little grain as it moves up and down in the sieve; the least grain of wheat He keeps His eye upon; He never sleeps, never for a moment forgets; and when it seems likely that a grain may fall, He knows how to catch it just at the falling moment, and to preserve it. "He gives more grace." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all; He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken." "It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish." "And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." "I give unto My sheep *eternal life*; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Much sifted, but not lost! Much tempest-tossed, but never shipwrecked! Much put into the fire, but never consumed! Blessed be God for all that!

Now observe, the very least of God's people is safe because the love of Christ is as much set upon the least as the greatest; because Jesus has as much bought with blood the least as the greatest; because Christ is as much the Surety of the little saints as of the strong saints; because the least in the family is as dear to the heavenly Father as the elder sons; because the absence of the feeblest saint would make a gap in heaven quite

as much as the loss of the greatest; because if Jesus should allow one of His people to perish, He would as much break His suretyship engagements by losing the least as the greatest; because it would be as much dishonor to Christ to allow the meanest as the best to fall, for Satan would say, "He kept the strong, but could not keep the weak." The very least of God's people is safe because Christ's love encompasses the lambs as much as the sheep, and eternal grace makes as sure their salvation as that of apostles and martyrs. God will not be thwarted, and Christ will not be robbed! The Holy Spirit will not be defeated! The covenant shall not be broken! The Oath shall not fall to the ground! The blood shall not have been spilt in vain, and intercession shall not go up to heaven unheeded for any one of these little ones—they must, they shall be kept! Though earth's old columns bow, not one of these shall be cast away! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but no word of Christ shall perish, and His word is, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." And therefore whoever believes must and shall be saved, be he little or be he great! God bless this present assembly and bring us all to trust in Jesus, and then give us this blessed salvation. Amen and Amen!

826 CHRIST, THE GLORY OF HIS PEOPLE – LUKE 2:32

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Evening, March 22nd, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." — Luke 2:32

WE MUST READ this passage literally, for so Simeon intended it. The Lord Jesus Christ, though once despised and rejected by His own countrymen, is the great honor and splendor of God's people, Israel; it is reckoned an honor to a nation when eminent persons are born of its stock and lineage; but Israel can claim the palm above all lands, for she can say that our Lord sprang out of Judah. Put together all the heroic and famous names of Greece and Rome—add all the literary splendors of Germany, and the flashing beauties of France, combine with these the blazing fame of Milton and Shakespeare, of Bacon and of Newton in our own land, and all countries put together cannot compass so great a glory of manhood as can the nation of the Jews, for they can claim not so much Moses, and David, and the prophets, as Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily! If mention is made of Egypt and Babylon, or Philistia and Tyre, saying, "This man was born there," the answer shall be concerning Zion, "The Son of Man was born in her." It ill behooves us ever to speak slightingly of the Jew;

it ill behooves the Christian church to despond concerning the conversion of the seed of Israel, or to be so indifferent as she sometimes is as to the conversion of Israel. Brothers and sisters, the day will come when the veil shall be taken from the eyes, and the hardness from the heart, and Abraham's sons shall behold the true Messiah, and accept Him as their glory and their all. In that day, after the long time of winter, how bright the summer will be! If their casting away brought the Gentiles so much blessing, what will their gathering together be but life from the dead! After so long alienation, how ravishing and delightful will be the reconciliation between the Bridegroom, and His ancient spouse! How will the earth ring with joy, and every river in Judea's land flow to the tune of heaven's own music, when Jesus and the Jew shall be reconciled, and He shall be, as He is prophesied to be, the glory of His people Israel!—

"The hymn shall yet in Zion swell
That sounds Messiah's praise,
And Your loved name, Immanuel!
As once in ancient days.
For Israel yet shall own her King,
For her salvation waits,
And hill and dale shall sweetly sing
With praise in all her gates.
Hasten, O Lord, these promised days,
When Israel shall rejoice;
And Jew and Gentile join in praise,
With one united voice."

It would have been wrong to use the text as I am going to use it if I had not first given you its primary meaning. We have no right to use texts for other purposes without, first of all, giving the literal meaning, and saying, "Such-and-such is

originally the mind of the Holy Spirit." It is doubtless the mind of the Spirit speaking here by Simeon, that the Lord Jesus shall be a light to lighten the once darkened Gentiles, but peculiarly the glory of the Jewish nation.

We shall now employ the *natural* Israel as a type of the Lord's elect ones, and surely there is no straining of the text when we say that Jesus Christ is the glory of the *spiritual* seed, the *redeemed* people, who stand to the Lord *actually* where Israel of old stood in the *type*. Jesus Christ is the glory of His people, His *spiritual* people Israel.

And why, with evident propriety, may the saints of God be compared to Israel? Surely because God has made a covenant with *them* as He did with Jacob. Jacob at the foot of the ladder saw a way which led from earth to heaven; we at the foot of the cross have beheld the same vision; we see a way from our poor fallen estate up to all the glories of the place where Jehovah dwells. That night a covenant was made with Jacob, and between God and our own souls—in the person of the Lord Jesus, there is a blessed compact made which shall stand secure though earth's old columns bow. He will be our God, and we shall be His people; He has made with us a covenant ordered in all things and sure; this is the great fountain of all our mercies, the ground of all our hopes! Our covenant God is the delight of our inmost souls, our castle and high tower, our sun, and our shield—

"He by Himself has sworn.
I on His oath depend.
I shall, on eagles' wings upborne,
To heaven ascend:
I shall behold His face,
I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders of His grace

Forevermore."

We may be compared with Israel, again, because if we are the children of God, we have learned to wrestle with the angel and prevail. It is one mark of the heir of heaven that he understands the value of secret prayer, and that he exercises himself in it; that is to him as stern a reality as wrestling is to the athlete when he seeks to hurl his antagonist to the ground. Not a mumbling of words, but a marshalling of all the powers of manhood to come into contest—loving, blessed contest with God Himself! Well may they be called prevailing princes who are so. Dear friend, if you are a man of secret prevailing supplication, why need you doubt that you are one of the Lord's Israels?

It may be that you have another likeness to Israel in the fact that you are much tried. It is not so sure a token of salvation as some would make it out to be, but yet it is written, "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." Poor Israel said, "All these things are against me," when one after another his beloved children were taken from him, and famine was in the land. Perhaps you may be tempted to say the same, and in this you have a likeness to Jacob, from which I could wish you to escape, for it were better far, if taking all these evils as they come, you could believe the heavenly declaration, "All things work together for good, to them who love God." Faith must be tried. God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without the rod. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

I hope we shall always be like Jacob in our faith, for though he may have occasionally distrusted, yet he was a man of giant faith, and has a place in that roll call of heroes in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He blessed the sons of Joseph leaning upon his staff, and gave commandment concerning the taking away of

his bones. He was not content to allow his body to rest in Egypt—he looked for the Promised Land and there, there only, would he have his aged body laid in the grave, as if in death he would take possession of the heritage which the Lord had promised to him, and to his seed forever. May you and I have a faith that cannot be satisfied with all the green plains of Goshen, nor the granaries of Egypt, but which longs for the better state—the Promised Land—which to the eyes of our body may be invisible, but which to the eyes of our faith is clearly revealed!

Now, the true Israel, which is spiritually the church of Christ, *is* said, according to the text, to be the Lord's people. "The glory of Your people Israel." Briefly let me remind you, my fellow believers, of the ties which make us the Lord's. Are we not His, tonight, by His eternal choice? "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth." The eternal Father has selected us from among the ruins of the Fall, and given us into the hands of Christ, that we may be His portion, His bride, His jewels, "according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." We are Christ's, next, by redemption. He has redeemed us from among men by a special and *particular redemption* which is peculiar to ourselves. A price has been paid for us—an *effectual* price which will not permit, for a moment, that the objects so purchased shall ever be lost. "You are not your own, you are bought with a price." The saints are redeemed from among men; thus are you Christ's by double bonds—the gift of the Father, and the purchase of His own blood. The Father gave you to Jesus, and none shall pluck you out of His almighty hands! You are His, too, this night, by *conquest*. Admit it; He has struggled with your sins, and overcome them; the Spirit of the living God has taken you, as it were, like a lamb from the jaws of the lion; you were led captives by Satan, but Christ met the devil, and overcame him

in a terrific duel, and you, the once willing captives of the powers of darkness, are now Christ's portion made free and blessed! You are now the possession of your Conqueror, for He took you out of the hand of the enemy with His sword, and with His bow; you *belong* to Christ as the spoil which He has won from death and hell.

You are His, again, by the voluntary dedication of yourselves to Him. Come, beloved, is it not so? Will you not confess—

> "'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
> I am my Lord's, and He is mine!
> He drew me, and I followed on,
> Charmed to confess the voice divine"?

If you feel aright, you will confess that there is not a drop of blood in your veins which does not belong to Jesus, nor a hair on your head which is not His. All the Isle of Man now belongs to Jesus, and you will count it foul scorn that sin should have a lodge within the territories which belong to your liege Lord and Master! From within the triple kingdom of your spirit, soul, and body, you will to the best of your power, hunt out every rebel against the dominion of your Lord Jesus. You are His tonight, you know you are! You rejoice to confess the blessed impeachment, and are willing before men, angels, and devils, to renew the dedication of yourselves to Him.

And, once again, you are His in conjugal bonds—married to Him as chaste virgins; His unbounded love espoused you before time began, and it has not diminished; He claims you as His own bride, and you call Him the Husband of your souls, and delight to have it so. More than that, you are His in vital union as the members belong to the head; you are in personal, vital, actual *communion* with the Son of God! You are thus His

in the fullest, and most absolute sense; oh, you will not start back from being altogether His, but come closer and closer to a full surrender, and desire to feel more powerfully the fact that you are Christ's people, wholly belonging to Him, not in part, not held by a kind of mortgage—but Christ's freehold, Christ's absolute property! You bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and desire to be His now, and His world without end. Now, it is to such as these, who are like Israel, and who belong to Christ, that the text shall be addressed tonight; Jesus Christ is the glory of such. We will pause a moment, and then let us plunge into the center of the text.

I. When we say that Christ is our glory, we mean that **WE GET ALL THE GLORY WE HAVE THROUGH HIM**.

Some men go to schools for glory, others to the camps of war; in all kinds of places men have sought after honor, but the believer says that Christ is the mine in which he digs for this gold—Christ is the sea in which he fishes for this pearl—he gives up all other searches, and looks for glory in Jesus, and nowhere else. Now, beloved, we find our adorable Lord to be our glory tonight, but in what respects? Well, we have the glory, first, of *election*—of being chosen by God out of the rest of mankind, to be a separated people before which imperial pomp grows pale! And this comes to us altogether through Jesus Christ. "According as He has chosen us in Him from before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy."

Our next glory is that we are *redeemed*; it is no small honor for a man to know that God loved him so well that He gave a price so costly that all heaven and earth could not match it with another—that He gave His only-begotten Son that we might be redeemed. Now, beloved, we are not redeemed except through Jesus Christ, and if it is our glory that we are emancipated today, that our fetters are all broken, that we are the Lord's freemen, we know with what a price we gained this

liberty, for we were not freeborn. Yes, the glory of the Lord's freeman must be only in the Lord Jesus, who is the Son, who by His blood makes us free, indeed.

It is the glory of a *Christian that he is adopted*, that he is a son of God, but this, again, is only through Jesus Christ. We are joint-heirs with Christ. We have no relation except through His standing at the top of the page in the family register. He is a Son, and we become the many brothers and sisters, but only because He condescended to take upon Him our nature, and become the first-born among us.

Brothers and sisters, it is a great joy to know, and a great glory to say, "I am *justified*." We can stand upright tonight and say, "Who shall lay anything to my charge? Before the court of King's Bench of heaven, before the Chancery of the universe, who dares condemn me?" To be pardoned and accepted of God is a matchless privilege. Now, no man can claim justification of a truth except through Jesus Christ, for here is the top and the bottom of a man's justification—that the righteousness of Christ has been given to him, and that the blood of Christ has washed him. "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather that has risen again; who sits at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Remember this, my brothers and sisters—we are accepted, but we are accepted *in the Beloved*, and we are justified, but we are justified *in His righteousness*. We are a people dear to God, and near to Him, but all this lies in Jesus Christ; we are comely with the comeliness which He puts upon us, and secure in God's sight because we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

One part of the Christian's glory, and for my part one which I sigh for more and more, is the glory of *sanctification*. It is a great glory to have a new heart, and a right spirit, and to pant after holiness, but this also comes by the same royal road—for we are sanctified through the *blood of Jesus*, which the

Holy Spirit applies to us. There is not a particle of true sanctity in the entire world which does not spring from the cross! Everything which makes us like Christ first comes from Christ, *not* from the works of the law, nor from the strivings of the flesh, nor the teachings of philosophy, but altogether—

"From the water and the blood
From the riven side which flowed."

If we glory, then, in sanctification, we dare not glory except in Christ Jesus, whose blood has made us priests and kings unto God.

And, brothers and sisters, it is a great glory to a man to know that he is *safe*. I love our Arminian friends very heartily, but I should not like to be one of them, for they have such a precarious salvation that they do not know whether it will ultimately save them or not! It will save them *if* they are faithful, but ah, that unhappy thought is the one dangerous link in the chain, and I dare not trust *my* poor unfaithful soul to such a frail support. They are traveling in a carriage, the axles of which may break before they reach their journey's end! I bless God I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day. But if a man knows himself, by faith, to be saved, his knowledge is baseless presumption if he rests his safety anywhere but on the immovable rock of the finished work of Jesus Christ! He who can say, "Yes, I trust Christ to save me not only today or tomorrow, for He has worked out for me an *everlasting* salvation; I believe that He will be with me, and acknowledge my name at the bar of judgment"—such a man knows that he is resting only in Jesus, and then his glory as to his safety is a glory in Christ, and in Christ alone.

Thus I might continue showing you that there is not a single treasure which a Christian possesses which does not come to him but through Christ. He has nothing in which he can glory, but what he is sweetly compelled to say of it, "I gained this in the market of Calvary; I found this in the mines of a Savior's suffering; all this came to me through my bleeding, buried, risen, coming Lord, and He shall have the glory of it as long as I live."

II. There is a second meaning to the text, namely this— **WE SEE A GLORY IN CHRIST** which swallows up all other glories as the sun's light conceals the light of the stars.

True believers see glory, first, in Christ's person; they are often overwhelmed as they contemplate His Godhead and His manhood divinely blended; all His attributes strike them as glorious; they cannot think of His character as He manifested it while here below, or as it is revealed before the throne above, without falling into raptures of adoring wonder, love, and praise. If others tell them of the glory of such-and-such philanthropists and able men, the saints reply, "We have perceived no glory anywhere comparable with that which gleams in the character of Christ." Oh, how deeply was Rutherford in love with his sweet, unutterably sweet Lord Jesus; would to God I were as far gone as he in that heavenly union, communion, and rapture! What expressions he uses; how deep he dips his pen; how glowingly he writes, and yet he never exaggerates; it is impossible! Christ is too lovely for us ever to say a word that shall approach half-way to the fullness of His unspeakable excellence and boundless worth! Much less need we ever fear lest we shoot with a bow that shall pass the mark; no, beloved, our Lord's person is the admiration of the highest intellects that God has ever made, and though angels have been educated in the great science of Christ crucified these many years, yet—

"The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see!
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height."

Incarnate God is yet beyond them, and still, instead of being wearied with their pursuit, they are yet students, sitting at the feet of the church of God, that there may be made known among principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God! Oh, you shall never see anything so glorious as the person of the beloved if your eyes are but once favored to gaze upon Him, and your heads but once permitted to lean upon His loving bosom! Brothers and sisters, the moon is a blot, and the sun a burnt-out coal compared with our Immanuel!

The saints see a great glory in the sufferings of Christ. When a base world turns away from the Despised and Rejected, it is then that the regenerate heart clings fastest to Him, oh, how divinely the scarlet of His blood becomes Him! Was ever Caesar's purple half as glorious? He is bright in heaven; be You worshipped forever, Sun of our souls! But if there is a place where above all others we would kiss His feet, and wash them with our tears, and love Him best of all, it is Calvary's cross. How our hearts burn when we think of His bearing the load of guilt for us—groaning, sweating, bleeding and painfully yielding up His life! A root out of a dry ground He may be to this blind-eyed world, but to us, beloved, who have been admitted into the mystery of His inmost heart; all over glorious is our precious Lord, a miracle of love, the astonishment of earth, the marvel of heaven, the all in all of our souls!

If there were time, we might say that He has been glorious to us in His resurrection, especially since He has taught us to rise with Him in newness of life—glorious in His ascension,

now that He is sitting at the right hand of the Father, especially now that we have been raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him. He is glorious in His *intercession;* what a comfort it is to us to think that our name is on one of the stones of that glorious breastplate! He is glorious, too, in His *second advent*. We expect Him to come soon; it is earth's highest hope, the church's most fervent prayer! Come quickly Lord Jesus! To see You we would gladly give up the sight of everything beneath the stars! To see You in Your beauty come riding through the streets; to behold You with the rainbow wreath, and robes of storm, yes, to have one glimpse of that great white throne, though it were but a distance, and to hear You say one word—would be a kind of everlasting heaven! But for once to have seen Him; but for once to have heard Him; it might make men content to bear a thousand trials but for once, with heart, and eye, and soul, to drink a full draught of the glory of Christ! Brothers and sisters, our soul fires as we proceed, and we long to praise and sing—

"King of kings! Let earth adore Him,
High on His exalted throne!
Fall, you nations, fall before Him,
And His righteous scepter own—
All the glory
Be to Him, and Him alone!"

But we must not stop, nor need we tarry. It is enough to have proved it to every Christian heart, though indeed, it needed no proof, that Jesus Christ is the glory of His people Israel, in the sense that they shall glory in Him.

III. In the third place, the text is true in the sense that **WE GIVE GLORY TO HIM**.

Alas! Alas! It makes a Christian's blood boil to see glory given in a professed place of worship, yes, and in a professed Protestant church, too, to a pack of scamps who call themselves "priests"! I would not call them by such a name if they were honest enough to go off to the Church of Rome, where they ought to be, but having the impudent effrontery to attempt to palm themselves off in this country of ours for what they are not, I know of no words bad enough for them! What reverence or respect is to be paid to those gentry inside those brass gates, around the thing they call an altar? I suppose those gates enclose a sort of holy place into which the poor laity must not go! If these priests had their way, we should have to go down and lick the soles of their feet as our benighted forefathers aforetimes bowed before the hirelings of Rome! Does it not make a man feel when you see pictures of "his holiness," and the cardinals, and so on, scattering their benedictions at the Vatican, or at St. Peter's, while admiring crowds fall down, and worship them, that it were infinitely better to bow to *Satan* himself? We give glory unto *God,* but not a particle of glory to anything in the shape of a man, or an angel, either. Have I not stood and seen the crowds by hundreds fall down and worship images and dressed-up dolls? I have seen them worship bones and old teeth; I have seen them worship a skeleton dressed out in modern costume—said to be the skeleton of a saint; and I have marveled how we could, in this 19th Century, find people so infatuated as to think that such idolatry was pleasing to the Most High God! We, beloved, the people of God who know Christ, can give no glory to this rubbish, but turn away from it with horror! Our glory must be given to Christ, and to Christ, alone. Now, here is the touchstone to try your religion by; when you pray, *to* whom do you pray? *Through* whom do you pray? When you sing, *for* whom is the song meant? When you brothers preach, to whose honor

do you preach? To whom do you intend to do service? When you go out among the poor, when you distribute alms, when you scatter your tracts, when you talk about the gospel—for whom do you do all this? For, as the Lord lives, if you do it for *yourselves*, or for *any* besides the Lord Jesus, you do not know what the vitality of godliness is! Christ and Christ only must be the grand objective of the Christian! The promotion of His glory must be that for which we are willing to live, and for which, if necessary, we would be prepared to die. Oh, down, down, down, with everything else—but up, up, up, with the cross of Christ! Down with your baptism, and your masses, and your sacraments! Down with your priestcraft, and your rituals, and your liturgies! Down with your fine music, and your pomp, and your robes, and your garments, and all your ceremonies! But up, up, up, with the doctrine of the naked cross, and the expiring Savior! Let the voice ring throughout the whole world, "Look unto Me and live!" There is *life* in a look at the Crucified One! There is life in simple confidence in Him—but there is life *nowhere else!* God send to His church an undying passion to promote the Savior's glory, an invincible, unconquerable pang of desire and longing that by any means King Jesus may have His own, and may reign throughout these realms! In this sense, then, Jesus is and must be the glory of His people.

IV. But there is another sense, namely, **FROM JESUS IS REFLECTED ALL THE GLORY WHICH IS PUT UPON HIS PEOPLE**.

Whatever glory they have, and they have much in the eyes of angels, and much honor in the eyes of discerning men, it is *always* the reflection of the Savior's glory. I know some holy men and women for whom I cannot but feel the deepest and keenest respect, but the reason is because they have so much of my Master about them; I think I would travel many miles to talk with some of them because their speech is always so full of

Him, and they live so near to Him. If you take down some of the old books of the Puritans, and others, I know which you will love the best if you love Christ. Why, those who speak of Him! And when you get into the middle of the chapter where some holy man of God is extolling Him, then you will say, "He being dead yet speaks, and speaks just that to which my ears would listen." If there should ever be any glory about you, young man, it will have to come through your having much of Christ in you! Believe me, the true path to glory for a Christian is never to try to excel in literary attainments apart from Jesus! He may lawfully try for that in subservience to the higher aim—still, that must not be his glory as a Christian. It never ought to be the glory of the Christian that he is a good business man—he should be a good business man, but still that is not to be the *object* of his glory. If you make anything to be your glory except Christ, God will prepare a worm to eat the root of it, for He will have you; if you are His, He will have you chaste to Himself, and you shall never have anything to glory in but Christ. You know, beloved, this is a trying point with many of us, for I am afraid that sometimes we even get to glory in our ministry—and if we do, it will be all over with our usefulness. We must glory in Jesus, and not in our ministry, "Oh," said those disciples as they came back with excited hearts—"Lord, Lord, even devils are subject to us!" "Ah," said Jesus, "Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." *That* is the point! You must come back to that—rejoicing in your own *personal salvation* through the precious blood of Jesus Christ! You must rejoice in Him, and then you will think thus: "Well, even if my ministry should not prosper, though I hope it will, yet if I have glorified Christ, it shall be enough reward for me. If He is lifted one inch higher, it does not matter if I am trod like mire in the streets; if His dear name is but made illustrious, I will be nothing; if no one shall ever

lisp my name with approbation, then so be it; let Your servant be a dog, and let him be buried and forgotten as long as King Jesus wears the crown, and men cry, 'Long live the King!'" Oh, this is the Christian's great desire—that he may win Christ! And this it is which gives glory to him, and makes him esteemed of God, to have lived with an unselfish passion for Jesus gleaming in his breast, to have lived with so heavenly a brightness shining from his brow, and glittering through his entire life! Thus the true glory of every Christian is His Master's, and comes from Him.

V. But now once more. The text may be read in this sense—Christ is the glory of His people, that is to say, **THEY EXPECT GLORY WHEN HE COMES**.

"It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He is." Our glory is laid up; we are not wearing our Sunday clothes yet; all this is but the weekday garb, and it is very dusty and commonplace, and with many, the poor body is getting very worn out, too. You may well—

"Long for evening to undress
That you may rest with God,"

for when you wake up, what a bright suit will be ready for you! Oh, such garments of glory and beauty, that you will scarcely know yourselves in them! You will not be like your present selves, you will be like Christ—

"Since Jesus is mine
I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off this garment of clay;
To die in the Lord is a covenant blessing
Since Jesus to glory through death led the way."

When you follow Jesus in resurrection, what glory! But we must not begin to speak of that, for we should never leave off at all if we began to talk about that glory—the glory of perfection, the glory of being delivered from sin, the glory of conquest, having trod Satan under our feet! The glory of eternal rest, the glory of infinite security, the glory of being like Christ, the glory of being in the light and brightness of God, standing, like Milton's angel, in the very sun itself! If you want to know what heaven is, you can spell it in five letters! And when you put the five letters together they sound like this— JESUS! That is heaven! It is all the heaven the angels round the throne of God desire to know. They need nothing better than this—to see His face, to behold His glory, and to dwell in it world without end!

VI. Thus far have we been led into many precious truths of God; we have now done with the *doctrinal* part of the text, but we must prolong our meditation two or three minutes to speak a little upon **THE PRACTICAL DRIFT OF THE SUBJECT**.

We have just two or three things to say. We would give a word of warning to those of you who seek your glory anywhere else, because as surely as you do so, even if you meet with honor for a time, you will lose it. It is always ill to put your treasure where it will be stolen from you. Now, suppose you seek your glory in your learning. Well, well, well! Let the sexton take up your skull after you have been dead a little while, and what learning will there be in it? What show of wisdom will be found in it when it is resolved into a little impalpable brown powder? What will your science, and your mathematics, and your classics do for you in death and judgment? Suppose you seek your glory in fame, and become the favorite of the nation as a great soldier. When the grave-digger rattles your old bones about, what will that signify? You will have great fame, you say,

and men will talk about you. Well, will that stop the worms from eating you? Will it give you a single moment's repose, if you are found in hell, to know that there are those on earth who say that you were a famous man? Great men in hell look very small! Great men in the pit of hell have to suffer as well as others—yes, they endure more of anguish because they were so great, and had so many responsibilities. When you wake up in the Day of Judgment, you graspers of earthly honors will get to reaching for your glory, and trying to find it, you will be like the sleeper who dreamed that he had much gold; he was gathering it up by handfuls, but when he woke, he was in a narrow attic in the abode of poverty, and as penniless as when he fell asleep! Ah yes, if you seek your glory anywhere on earth, you will lose it, even if for a while you win it. But he who has his glory in Christ, when he opens his eyes in the next world will see Christ, and so behold his glory safe and firmly entailed upon Him! "There," says he, "is my treasure, and I have it, have it forever." This is security which no bolts, and iron safes, and Chubb's locks can ever give you! Do but put your treasures into Christ, and they are all safe! Even infernal pickpockets shall not be able to take Christ from you! If you win Christ, and put your treasure in Him, you are secure! God grant, brothers and sisters, that we may be wise for eternity, for all other wisdom is but folly.

Another word and that is a word of rebuke. There are some preachers we know of, and I suppose there will always be some of the form, who preach, preach, preach, but they never preach what is Israel's glory. They talk of *anything* but Christ! Oh, how often have I heard the complaint from Christian people, "Sir, our minister is a talented man; he is, on the whole, a sound man doctrinally, and he preaches to us a great deal *about* the gospel, but oh, we wish he would preach the gospel, not preach *about* it, but preach the thing itself! O that he would preach Christ!"

The best sermons are the sermons which are fullest of Christ! A sermon without Christ is an awful, a horrible thing; it is an empty well; it is a cloud without rain; it is a tree twice dead, plucked by the roots! It is an abominable thing to give men stones for bread, and scorpions for eggs, and yet they do so who preach not Jesus! A sermon without Christ? As well talk of a loaf of bread without any flour in it! How can it feed the soul? Men die and perish because Christ is not there, and yet His glorious gospel is the easiest thing to preach, and the sweetest thing to preach—there is variety in it, there is more attractiveness in it than in the entire world besides! And yet so many will gad abroad, and make their heads ache, and turn over those heavy volumes to get something which shall be nothing better than a big stone to roll at the mouth of the sepulcher, and shut in Christ as though He were still dead! O brothers, let us, if we cannot blow the silver trumpet, blow the ram's horn—but let the blast always be Christ, Christ, Christ! Always let us make the walls ring with the dear name of the exalted Savior, and let us tell men that there is salvation in no other, but that there is salvation *and* life for them in Jesus—life for them *now*, life for every soul that looks to Jesus—depending, alone, in *Him!* Dear teachers in the school, continue always telling the children about Jesus! Dear friends who work in any way for the Lord's glory, here is your one topic! The old proverb is, "Cobbler, stick to your last," so, Christian, "Stick to your text," and let the text be Jesus Christ! Let no glitter or show tempt you away from that. This cool snow of Lebanon—be not taken away to drink of the tepid streams that mock the thirsty soul! This gold of Ophir—there is none like it, seek no other! This is the grandest pasture to wander in—this glorious subject, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Let Him be preached, since HE is the GLORY of Israel!

There are some of you to whom I have a last word to say, and that is, some of you love Jesus Christ, but you are ashamed to say so. Now, since He is the glory of His people Israel, I shall be afraid of you, and *for* you, if you do not make Him your glory. Instead of being ashamed to confess Him and His cause, why, surely you will count it to be your shame that you are ashamed, and you will come forward, and say, "Yes, I cast in my lot with His people; He is such a blessed Christ; I will never turn my back on Him, if He will but have me, here I am. Put my name down in the church roll—by all means let me be baptized as He was! Let me come to His Table, and let me do this in remembrance of Him. He is a dear Lord, and I should not like it to be thought that I was ashamed of Him." I shall not press it on you, because a word is enough for a heart that is tender, and if you truly love Him, you will not need any drawing forward. You will say, "Oh, may He only keep me, and make me faithful; I am all too glad to have the opportunity of saying that I am on His side—for Him I am resolved to live, and if necessary, by His grace, for Him I would be resolved to die." Do not put it off, then; come and see the elders of the church; they will be glad to see you upon the matter, that is to say, if you belong to Christ. If you do not, do not profess to be what you are not! Mind you, do not come forward and say you are Christ's if you are not! To you who are not His, let me say, Jesus is to be had for the asking; if you seek Him, He will be found of you; go not to your rest tonight till you have said, "Lord, you are the glory of Your people; be my glory! Give me Yourself! Help me to trust You." And after you have done that, then trust Him, and God bless you, for His own name's sake. Amen.

827 THE FACULTY BAFFLED, THE GREAT PHYSICIAN SUCCESSFUL – MARK 5:25-28

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 23rd, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood 12 years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched His garment. For she said, If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole." — Mark 5:25-28

BRIEFLY CONSIDER this poor woman's case. She was afflicted with a disease of exceedingly long standing which not only wasted her strength, and threatened to bring her speedily to the grave, but rendered her, according to the Jewish ceremonial law, unclean, and therefore unable to mix in company. Thus she was doomed to be a poor, suffering, desponding, desolate woman. The physicians of those days were bold enough to attempt impossible cures, but their skill was not at all commensurate with their courage; they tormented their patients, but seldom relieved them of anything but their money. Even a few hundred years ago, many of the articles which were given to patients as medicines, and cried up as drugs of sovereign efficacy, were so unutterably disgusting, that I should not like to repeat their names; and the processes of surgery, then common among practitioners, would have been exceedingly satisfactory if they had been intended to kill, but

were both absurd and inhuman if proposed as salutary operations. The science of medicine, indeed, did not then exist, and in the age of our Lord, surgery and medicine were just a mass of quackery, and daring pretension, without anything of skill or knowledge to support their claims. This poor woman had however, in her anxious desire to be restored to society and to health, gone first to one, and then to another, and yet another—although all caused her suffering by acrid medicines or by severe operations, and after the end of 12 years, she found herself penniless as well as worse in health. Just then, her physical state being still the highest thought in her mind, she heard that there was a prophet who healed diseases. Having listened to one or two of the stories of the cures worked by Him, and having, perhaps, seen some of those who had been happy enough to be the subjects of His miracles, she said to herself, "That man is doubtless sent of God; He professes to be the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God; I believe He is so, and if He is such an one, then He is so full of sacred force, that if I may but get near enough to touch the hem of His robe, I shall be restored." Happy day it was for her when she imbibed that idea! Happier, still, when she put it into practice—when tremblingly she put forth her finger, touched the hem of the Savior's garment, and was that moment restored!

I shall not need to say more concerning the narrative itself. It commends the Savior to you—shows you His great power in the physical world, and so proves His Deity, and endears Him to you for His mercy and compassion. But this woman has many parallels in the *spiritual* world. Multitudes like she are diseased with a wasting despondency, an unceasing tendency to despair, and they have been trying all the miserable comforters with which this world abounds. And after wasting their substance, and their strength, they are now brought to utter spiritual destitution—they feel they can do nothing, they are

ready to perish. I hope this morning, if never before, they will hear of Jesus who is able to heal the most desperate cases, and that they will be resolved to apply to Him, that by a sincere, even if a feeble faith, they may be brought into contact with His healing energy and may *today* be delivered from all evil by the great Restorer's touch! God grant it, for the Redeemer's sake, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and He shall have all the praise!

I intend, this morning, first of all, *to expose the physicians upon whom poor sin-sick souls often trust;* when I have done so, I will show you *why all these physicians, without exception, fail;* thirdly, I shall describe *the plight of the patient after the failure of these trusted physicians;* and lastly, show how *a cure can be worked even in those.*

I. Let me **EXPOSE THE PHYSICIANS WHO DELUDE SO MANY BY THEIR VAIN PRETENSIONS**.

Among the herd of deceivers I single out one of the vilest, first—an old, established doctor who has had a wide practice among sin-sick souls; a wicked old poisoner he is, but for all that, exceedingly popular, named Dr. Sadducee. He adopts usually the homoeopathic principle, namely, to cure like by its like; he gives one form of sin as a cure for another. For instance, as soon as he sees one melancholy with unbelief, he prescribes licentiousness. He says, "You are getting dull; you must cheer up; you need to mix with society; a young person like you ought not to be disturbed with these serious thoughts; those are mere fanatics who alarm you; be calm. I would recommend you to attend the theater or the music hall, these will drive dull cares away." He feels the patient's pulse, tells him it is much too low—he must really take a little stimulant, and try what gaiety will do. Alas, this old, but damning prescription is frequently written out, and pressed upon awakened souls as if it were wisdom itself, whereas it is a piece of Satanic craft and lies! It never did work a cure, and never can; it bids the man escape

from drowning by plunging deeper beneath the waves; it tells him to quench the flame which is burning in his heart by adding fuel to it; it pretends to heal the leper by thrusting him into the inner recesses of the morgue where disease runs amok. By making bad worse, the lover of pleasure hopes to recover from the qualms of conscience. As a notable instance of Dr. Sadducee's practice in its mildest form, I would quote the case of George Fox, the celebrated founder of the Quakers. When perplexed about his salvation, he went to several friends and ministers for advice. One said he thought it would do him much good to smoke tobacco; another recommended him to get married as speedily as possible; another thought if he joined the volunteers, that would certainly take his thoughts off of his melancholy. "Alas," he said, "I found them as empty as a hollow drum." Such physicians minister no medicine to a diseased mind. A story is told of Carlini, the Italian actor, who, being the subject of heavy depression of spirit, applied to a French physician, and it was recommended he attend the Italian theater, and, said the physician, "If Carlini does not dispel your gloomy complaint, your case must be desperate, indeed." The physician was not a little surprised when his patient replied, "Alas, sir, I *am* Carlini! And while I divert all Paris with mirth, and make them almost die with laughter, I myself am dying with melancholy." How empty and insufficient are the amusements of the world! Even in their laughter, their heart rejoices not; miserable comforters are all those who would drown seriousness in wine and merriment. When the heart is breaking it is vain to offer music and the dance, or to fill high the flowing bowl; when the arrows of God stick fast in a man's soul, the world's vain songs suit not with the hour, they jar on the ear, and increase the misery which they would remove. When *God* awakens a sinner, he cannot be so readily deceived as when he was in his dreams; the Holy Spirit

has made him feel the bitterness of sin, and bruised him with the rod of conviction, and now his broken bones demand a real and true physician; and he cannot endure the simpering deceiver who tells him that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit! It is too late to say to such a man, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"; he dreads the thought of dying, and trembles lest death should come upon him unawares!

A much more respectable firm of physicians has been established from time immemorial in the region of Mount Sinai, near the abode of one Hagar, known as the bondwoman. The business is now carried on by Dr. Legality and his pupil, Mr. Civility. You will remember that in John Bunyan's time, they were in a large practice. Mr. Worldly Wiseman was their patron, and sent the Pilgrim round that way, telling him that the old doctor had much skill in delivering men of their burdens, and that if the old gentleman himself was not at home, his young man, Mr. Civility, would do almost as well. This firm was trading, in our Savior's day, under the name of Scribe and Pharisee; it was the same deceptive system, but under different names, and it will always be the same piece of imposture until the crack of doom. The theory of practice is this, "Be careful in diet and regimen; be very observant of certain laws and regulations, and then your issue of blood, or whatever it may be, shall be healed." Go all over England, and the great doctor for men's souls, the most popular of physicians now living is this Dr. Legality. The one great prescription is, "Do this and do that; abstain from this, and give up the other; keep the commandments, and pray at certain hours, and these things will save you." Dressed out in different fashions, but always the same thing, this great lie of salvation by the works of the law is still holding men under its iron sway, and deluding them to their destruction. There may be some now present who are unhappy enough not to know the truth of God which Paul tells

us so plainly, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." I was myself for many a day treated by this Dr. Legality, and many a black draught have I swallowed under his orders. I tried to keep the law of God, and thought that my repentance and tears would be atonement for the past; but who can keep the law? What man can keep whole what he has broken? We have each of us already sinned, and therefore the hope of salvation by our own goodness is a vain one! The law pronounces a curse upon the man that sins but *once!* How can a man, then, having already sinned 10,000 times, hope by any *future* obedience to escape from the curse which hangs thick and heavy over his head, soon to burst in eternal storm? Yet this is the fond delusion of humanity! Sinai is still the chosen route to heaven for the crippled sons of a father who found the task too much for him. Some of you imagine that if you do your best—if you are kind to everybody, if you are generous to the poor, if you owe no man anything, if you conduct yourselves respectably, this is enough to save you. But it is not so! He who believes not on Jesus Christ shall be *damned* as well in his morality as in his debauchery! He who casts not himself upon the mercy of God, as revealed in the crucified Savior, has shut against himself the one portal to heaven, and shall never be able to enter into eternal life!

There is another physician whom I greatly despise, but am compelled to mention him because he has entrapped many, one Dr. Ceremonial. He is the vilest of quacks, a very impostor, a transparent deceiver; his drugs are worthless trash, and his modes of operation are rather the tricks of a merry-andrew, or the antics of a dancing master, than the sober teachings of thought and judgment. This Dr. Ceremonial has patented a lotion for producing *regeneration in little children* by the application of a few drops to their foreheads; he puts his hands on the

heads of boys and girls, and by what he calls occult influence, confirms them in divine grace! He professes to be able to make a piece of loaf, and a cup of wine to be actually divine, and in themselves a channel of grace to the souls of men! The substances are material— a mouse may nibble at the one, a bottle will hold the other; you can touch them, taste them, smell them, and yet *fools* adore them as divine, and imagine that material substances can be food for souls! Surely this Dr. Ceremonial flourishes all the more because of the monstrous absurdity of his teachings! His pills are huge, but men have wide throats, and can swallow anything. Why, think, for a minute, and then wonder for an hour—men are to be *sanctified* by gazing at genuflections, millinery, and candles. The East is said to be a more gracious quarter of the heavens than the West, and creeds repeated with the head in that direction possess a peculiar efficacy! It appears that in spiritual operation, certain *colors* are peculiarly efficacious—prayers said or sung in *white* are far more prevalent than in *black;* and according to the age of the year, and the condition of the moon, violet, scarlet and blue are more acceptable to God! I have no patience with these things. It is hardly good enough sport for laughter—but so long as fools abound, knaves will flourish, and this Dr. Ceremonial will get men to spend their substance in abundance, and laugh in his sleeve to think that rational beings should be his silly dupes! I trust there are none such here. I hope none of you are so fooled. What is there in crossings, bowings, and uttering over and over the same words? What is any worship unless the reason and heart enter into it? What can there be in one material substance to give it sanctity? Is it not as absurd as the fetishism of the Bushman, to believe that bricks and mortar, and slates and boards can make a holy place—that indeed; any one place can be a jot holier than another, that any plot of ground can be holier than common ground? Or that any *man,*

because certain words have been said over his godless, graceless head, can be made a dispenser of the divine grace of God, and a pardoner of sins?! We are not so befooled, but still this quack drives a good trade, and is held in very high repute.

Here I may name one Dr. Ascetic, who has taken a house hard by the abode of Dr. Ceremonial. His business, however, does not flourish quite as much now as formerly, for his methods are a little too rigorous for the times. Under his treatment men are taught that pain and virtue are much alike—that starvation is a means of grace, dirt is devotion, and horsehair next to the skin a sanctifying irritant. Few persons like this heroic treatment, but certain brotherhoods and sisterhoods amuse themselves with the treatment in a modified form. The more heroic doses of wormwood and gall are out of fashion, but still, men like a bitter in *moderate* quantities. In the olden times this Dr. Ascetic flourished! Then men wore hair shirts, flogged their poor shoulders, went on mad pilgrimages, and in other ways afflicted themselves—believing that great self-denials were patent medicines by which deliverance could be obtained from spiritual diseases. This system of soul-cure had such victims as hermits in caves, and the followers of Simon Stylites elevated upon columns with other imbeciles which time would fail us to mention. Even in these days we read of the nuns of St. Ann who always sleep in their coffins upright, and become unable to sleep in any other posture. The Fakeers in Hindustan do but carry out to perfection the regulations which some in this Christian land would impose upon our respect; but all this is the mere invention of man, and he who follows it shall find that he torments himself in vain.

I shall now mention a physician who practices among Dissenters as well as elsewhere, and I am persuaded has some of you for his patients. His name is Dr. Orthodoxy. His treatment consists in this, that you are to believe certain

doctrines most firmly and bigotedly, and *then* you shall be saved. Have I not some in this place, this morning, whose great difficulty about salvation is that they cannot quite comprehend the mystery of predestination? If you talk to them about the precious blood of Jesus, and speak of the soul-saving efficacy of a simple trust in Him, they reply, "But I cannot quite understand the doctrine of election!" And then they mention some passage of Scripture upon that subject—their notion being that if they could understand mysteries, they would then be saved, if they could hold the orthodox faith in every point, they would be delivered from their sins. But it is not so. I have known scores of persons who have been held in horrible bondage by exclusively thinking upon one part of orthodoxy to the exclusion of the rest; they have grown more wretched, more distracted, more hopeless than they were before, because having heard the doctrine of election and predestination propounded, they must forever be harping upon it. It is a blessed doctrine, and I believe it, and hold it firmly, that God has a chosen people, but for all that, *before* men have come to Christ, they often make that doctrine to be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense! Even if you would be infallible, and believe every truth of God as it is taught in Scripture in the most correct manner, *your belief would not save you!* True religion is something more than correct *opinions*. A man may as well descend to hell being orthodox as heterodox; there is a correct road to destruction as well as an incorrect one—I mean a way in which a man may carry the truth of God in his right hand, as well as another road in which the pilgrim hides a lie in his left.

One more physician I will mention, and that is Dr. Preparation. He holds and teaches that the way to be saved is to *prepare* yourselves for Christ, and if you prepare and make yourselves fit for Jesus Christ, then you will obtain peace. The modes of preparation are very much these, "You must deeply

wound yourself; you must doubt God's power to save you, and dishonor Jesus by your fears; you must endure terrors of conscience, and be the subject of alarms." It is not said so in the Bible, but still, this is the current teaching of many, and is so munch believed, that men will not trust in Jesus Christ because they have not felt this, nor experienced the other! Do I not, every week, meet with persons who tell me, "You invite those to come to Christ who feel their need; I do not feel any need as I ought, and therefore I may not come." I cannot understand why such people do not open their ears, for times out of mind I say that Jesus Christ did *not* come into this world to save *sensible* sinners only, but to save sinners from their insensibility! That Jesus Christ bids sinners, as *sinners,* believe in Him, and does not limit the command to those who repent! Men are not only to come with broken hearts, but if they cannot feel their need, they should come to Jesus to be helped to feel their need—for this He gives them—"'Tis His Spirit's rising beam." My Lord and Master needs nothing from you, O lost and bankrupt sinners! He bids you come simply trusting in Him, being nothing at all in yourself, and having all in Him. I believe those who think they do not feel their need, often feel their need the most; if anyone should say, "I have a sense of need," then he claims to have something good; but those who confess that they have no good feelings or emotions, that they are poor bankrupts, broken down, so that their last penny is gone—to them is the gospel sent! Trust Jesus, believe that He can do what you cannot do, and in the absence of any good in yourselves, believe that all the good you need is treasured up in Him! Cast yourselves—empty, naked, soul-diseased as you are, flat upon the perfect work of Jesus, and you shall be saved!

I have just gone through a list of those physicians with which I believe many of you have long been acquainted.

II. WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THEIR FAILURE? Why is it that none of the prescriptions of these learned and popular gentlemen have ever been able to work a single cure? Is it not, first of all because they, none of them, understand the disease?

If the disease of human nature were only a matter of *outward* iniquity, or only skin-deep through intellectual error—ceremonies, perhaps might have some effect, and legal exhortations might be of some use. But since the inmost *heart* of man is depraved, and the sin of our nature lies in the very *core* of our humanity—and is inherited from our birth, of what use is consecrated water, or sacraments, or good works, or anything *external* which cannot change the nature, and turn the bias of the mind? The will is obstinate; the affections are depraved; the understanding is darkened; the desires are polluted; the conscience is stultified, and legal physicians can only make clean the *outside* of the cup and platter— they touch not these inward evils. They do not really know that man is dead in sin; they treat the patient as if he had wounded himself a little, and could be salved and bound up, and made whole again. They know not the deep pollution of sin, and imagine that man has stained himself a little, and only a little, so a sponge of reformation and a little hot water of repentance will soon remove all unpleasant marks. But it is not so—the fountain of our being is polluted! The *foundation* of our nature is *rotten*, and not until we come to Christ, do we find that the physician who comes to the point, and who touches the disease at its source.

Moreover, *these physicians often prescribe remedies which are impossible to their patients.* They tell the man, "You must feel so much." *"Feel!"* he replies, "Why my heart is like granite! If I could *feel*, I could do all the rest, but I can no more make myself feel than I can make myself an angel! You bid me do what is far beyond my power." Then they bid him work, crying, "You

must press forward, be in earnest, agonizing, labor!" "But," he says, "I do try; I have tried for years, but my endeavors are not such as God accepts, and I may continue trying till I perish! I want to be told a sure way to salvation at once! I long for immediate peace, and light, and liberty." These physicians prescribe walking to those who have broken their legs, and sight as a remedy for those whose eyes are gone! They bid men to do what they cannot, and they never point them to what Jesus has done on their behalf. The gospel bids the sinner cease from his toiling, and trust alone in Jesus—having nothing, and being nothing in himself— but taking Jesus to be his all in all. And when it adds that even *this* is the *gift* of God's Spirit, then it puts before him an available method for the weakest, guiltiest, and most distressed.

Many of the medicines prescribed by these false physicians do not touch the case at all. As I have already shown you, outward ceremonies cannot, by any possibility, affect the inward nature, and the mere performance of good works, or the utterance of excellent prayers, can have no effect in quieting the conscience. Conscience cries, "I have offended God! How may I be reconciled to Him? My past sins clamor for vengeance! God is not just if He does not punish me! Oh, where shall I find peace for my soul?" Where, but in the bosom of the Mediator? Only at Calvary is the medicine for a wounded conscience to be found! From those five wounds of our blessed Lord, healing fountains are still streaming; he who looks to Him shall find peace and comfort, and full salvation! But the *doing* and the *feeling*, and the performing of *this* and *that*, and 10,000 things besides, are all a mockery, a delusion, and a snare! The disease of fallen humanity is wholly incurable except by the hand of Omnipotence. It is as easy for us to create a world as to create a new heart—and a man might as well hope to abolish cold and snow, as hope to eradicate sin from his nature by his own

power! He might as well say to this round earth, "I have emancipated you from the curse of labor"; as say to himself, "I will set myself free from the thralldom of sin." Jehovah alone can save! It is His prerogative, and they who tell me that they are to have a finger in it—that they and their deceivers, the priests, can assist a little in salvation; that their tears, their groans, their cries, their repentances, and their humbling can do at least *something*—these I say, fly in the face of God! These rob Him of His dearest prerogative! These impugn His word! They rob Him of His glory, and provoke Him to jealousy! God is still a sovereign, and will be treated as such; woe unto the man who contends with Him!

Brothers and sisters, let me say plainly this one word, and then leave this point. Rest assured that wherever in salvation you see a trace of the *creature's* power or merit, you see a work that is *spoiled* and *polluted*. If there is in the fountain one drop of anything but Jesus' blood, it will not cleanse! If there is in the robe one single thread of anything but what Christ worked out for us while here below, the whole robe is polluted, and will not serve as a wedding garment! For a needy soul the work must be Christ's from top to bottom—all of Him and all of divine grace; if there is *anything* of human merit, or anything else that comes of man, the work is marred upon the wheel, and God will not accept it. These are some of the reasons why these physicians fail to bring health and cure.

III. I shall describe **THE PLIGHT OF THE PATIENT WHO HAS TRIED THESE DECEIVERS**, and now at last, finds himself brought into distress.

For five years I was in that plight, seeking by every way that I knew of to find peace with God. At the end of that period my condition was much like that of this poor woman. Now there were four pieces of mischief done in her case. First, the woman had *lost all her time*. Twelve years! Who knows the value of a day?

Who can calculate the costliness of a year? Twelve years, all gone! And what a pity that these poor people who are seeking to be saved by the works of the law should be losing all that precious time! What a pity that you, dear friends, who are not yet saved, should be getting gray, and so many years should be running to waste! They ought to be spent for the Lord! I hope they may be, what remains of them. Think and be humbled; you have been all this time outside the banquet door; all this time unwashed, when the fountain is full; all this time unhealed, when the restoring hand can save you in a minute; all this time in jeopardy, in danger of your soul, while the gate of the city of refuge has been open. It is a solemn loss of time that these delusions bring on men, and yet we cannot tear them away from them, for if we prove the folly of one, they take to another; and if we prove the folly of all, yet still will they go back to them like a dog to his vomit. They will have *anything* sooner than go to Christ, for Christ Himself has said, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." Anywhere else men will cheerfully go, but not to Him. The second mischief in the case was that *she was no better.* If she had felt a little better, she would have had some encouragement; it would have been satisfactory to have some pain mitigated, some measure of the disease stopped. And so in *your* case—you are no better than you were when you first entered this house five years ago; you have reformed, perhaps, which is good—you have given up some evil things which were once very dear to you—that is well. But still you are not one grain happier! You could not die today with any greater comfort than you could have died five years ago; you have no better hope of immortality now, than you had then; no, sometimes you have fancied the darkness *thickens,* and the prospect of hope has become less and less apparent. A sad thing, is it not, that after *doing* so much, it should come to so little? You have put your money into a bag that is full of holes;

you have expended it for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not.

The third evil in the woman's case was *that she rather grew worse,* and in addition to that, she had suffered many things of the physicians. She had gained a loss. The doctors had blistered here, and lanced there, and given this acrid poison, and that nauseous drug, and had been skillful in nothing but in causing needless pain. So, while to effect your salvation you have been looking away from Christ to someone else, you have been needlessly troubled and tortured; despair has hovered around your path; despondency has hung its pall above you, and you have much more gloom yet to endure unless you give up all that comes of self, and cast yourself on Christ. I would make a venture of it, if I were you, for you cannot lose by it—you are as bad as you can be! Better, even if Jesus were angry, to run into His arms than to remain apart from Him. Jesus Christ the appointed Savior of men is able to save to the uttermost, but while you seek others it is not possible for you to be saved! They will either bolster you up with self-righteousness, which will harden your heart, or else cast you down by putting before you impossible duties to attempt which will be to increase your despair—

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good!"

Yet helpless sinners pierce themselves through with many sorrows as they fly to earthly physicians for relief. One more matter. The woman had now *spent all that she had.* Her poverty was a new ill of which the only good was that now she had no more to spend with the physicians! She was driven to Christ, so it is a most blessed, though painful experience, when a man has spent all, when he discovers that he has nothing left, no,

not so much as an atom of merit—or hope of ever having any! It is well when the man cries, "I have always thought that perhaps there might be an escape for me, but I have no hope left now; as for power, I am as destitute of it as I am of merit. I feel that I would, but cannot pray; I would, but cannot repent; I want to believe, but I can no more believe than I can fly—it must all come from God." At such a time it *will* come from God—for man's extremity is always God's opportunity! When you are empty, when your stock is all gone, even to the last rag and crumb, and you are left a helpless, hopeless, undeserving, hell-deserving sinner, and can truly feel that unless God stretches out His hand to save you, you are lost as the lost in hell are—it is *then* that Jesus Christ reveals Himself, and the soul cries, "My Lord, the glorious Son of God, there is no hope except in You! You can save me! I cast myself upon You, whether I sink or swim, for I am persuaded nothing else can rescue me, and while I can but perish if I do rely upon You, so at a venture I will rely upon You. If I am cast into hell, as I feel I deserve to be, yet I will still believe that You can save me." Ah, then you *cannot* perish, neither shall any pluck you out of His hands! If God gives you power to believe Christ, and trust yourself to Him, you are as surely saved as God is in heaven, and Christ there pleading at His right hand!

IV. Now to those who have spent their all on the false physicians, I have **A WORD TO SHOW HOW A CURE CAN BE WORKED**.

This woman said to herself, "The way of cure is for me to get near to Jesus; I can see that doctors are of no good; I cannot help myself, neither can the entire world besides assist me. I must press to get near to Him; if I cannot put my arms around Him, yet a little of Him is enough; if I cannot press to Him so as to lay hold of Him with my hands, yet as much as I can touch with my fingers will be enough; I know if I cannot touch Him,

if I can but get near the hem of His garment, and touch it, it will do." It is a sweet truth of God that the least of Christ will save. The best of men, the whole of men, cannot benefit you an ounce, but the least drop of Christ, the least touch of Christ will save! If your faith is such a poor trembling thing that it is hardly fit to be called faith, yet if it connects you with Christ, you shall have the virtue that goes out from Him. Remember, it was not this woman's *finger* that saved her—it was *Christ* whom she touched. True, the healing came by the act of *faith,* but the act of faith is *not* the healing—the healing all lies in the person, so that you are not to be looking to your faith, but to *Jesus the Lord!* Has your faith a good object? Do you rest in Jesus, God's Son, God's appointed propitiation? If so, your faith will bring you to heaven—it is good enough! The strongest faith a man ever had, if it did not rest on Christ, damned him! The weakest faith ever man or woman has, if it does but terminate in the precious person, and all-sufficient work of Jesus, will certainly save. The fact is, sinner, if you would be saved, you must, from this moment, have nothing more to do with yourself, with your goodness, or your badness. "I cannot feel," says the sinner—that is *yourself* again. Away with that feeling! You are to be saved by what *Christ* felt, not by what *you* feel! "I cannot," you say. What care I what you cannot do? Your salvation does not lie in what *you* can do, but in what *Jesus* can do, and He can do everything! Will you trust Him now? Let me help your faith with two or three words as the Holy Spirit may bless them. Christ is God—has He not power to save you? Christ, the bleeding Son of God, has bowed His head to the accursed death of the cross, bearing His Father's anger, that those who trust Him may not bear it. Cannot the bloodstained Christ pardon sin? Christ is His Father's darling, trust Him! Will not God grant mercy when you plead for Jesus' sake? Jesus lives today—He is no dead Christ that you are bid to trust in; He

lives, and this is His occupation—He is pleading before the throne of God, and this is His plea—"Father, forgive them for My sake."

Seeing He died to save, cannot He, now that He lives, save to the uttermost? At His last dying moment He said to the thief, "Today shall you be with Me in paradise." Can He not say as much now, since He wears the crown of glory? Yes, you may have come in here this morning without a good thought, never having spoken a holy word in your life, but He can save you as quickly as He did the thief! Yes, and though when that clock struck 12, you were a graceless wretch, yet at this moment you may already be a saved soul! Yes, and before the clock ticks again, another may be called by divine grace! Christ works not according to time; He is not limited by minutes; if you can turn your eyes to His cross, and say, "Lord, remember me," He can give you His reply, "You shall be with Me, before long, in paradise." With God incarnate, with the God-man who bled on the cross, with the Son of God ascended, clothed with majesty, reigning in splendor—with Him whose promise we this day proclaim to you, there can be neither difficulty nor debate! The promise runs thus—"He who believes on Him is not condemned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who believes not shall be damned." Will you believe in Him? It is to come to Him, to trust Him, to lean upon Him, to hang upon Him, to make Him your sole and only ground of dependence. Will you do this? Has God enabled you now, to do it? If so, go in peace—your faith has made you whole, your sins are forgiven you! Go and live to His praise, who bought you with His blood! Go, young man, and serve him earnestly who has served you so well. Go now, and till life's latest hour, be His servant who has been so much your friend! The Lord bless us for His name's sake. Amen.

828 DYING DAILY – I COR. 15:31

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, August 30th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"I die daily." — I Corinthians 15:31

IN A CERTAIN SENSE we all do this; the very moment we begin to live, we commence to die; we are like hour-glasses—there are fewer sands left to run from the very moment they begin to trickle down. The whole of our life is like an ebbing tide; our first months and years may look like advancing waves, but the whole is retreating, and by-and-by the living flood will be replaced by the mire of death—

"Our pulse, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the tomb."

Or, as Watts words it—

"Every beating pulse we count,
Leaves but the number less."

This is no land of the living, but the land of the dying, and this so-called life is but one protracted act of death. This is not our rest, our soul is always on the wing; like the swallows, we must depart for another land; life is a long descent to the valley of the shadow of death; it shelves gradually to the precipice,

and no man can prevent his feet from sliding down it every hour. We fly like arrows to that common target of mankind, the grave, so that we may all say in the words of the text, "I die daily."

Of some, also, this may be affirmed in a very painful and unhappy sense. They die daily because they feel a thousand deaths in fearing *one;* they are those of whom the apostle writes, "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." This nightmare oppresses them, and breaks their rest; this ghost stalks before them at all hours, and makes life grim with foreboding; this gall-drop makes all their pleasant things bitter; they are afraid to die, and yet are so fascinated by death, that they cannot take their eyes off it. They cannot shake off the chill horror of the grave; their clothes seem to them to smell of the coffin, and their bread tastes of the morgue; they are slaves to a fear whose chains are heavy. These timorous doves ought to remember that Jesus Christ came into this world on purpose, that He might deliver such as they are. It was never His intention that any of His people should be subject to the fear of death, nor ought they to be, nor, indeed, *would* they be if they walked by faith—for what can there be in death for a Christian to fear? "The sting of death is sin," but that is pardoned! "The strength of sin is the law," but Christ has fulfilled it! What is dying but departing to be with Christ, which is far better? And why should a man fear that which is far better for him; which will rid him of all his ills, admit him into unlimited blessedness, take him away from all fear and all care, and conduct him to the fullness of the glory which is laid up in Christ Jesus? I trust you and I may never have to moan out in that mournful and gloomy sense, "I die daily," but with *holy joy* may we look forward to the hour of our departure which is so near at hand.

Paul used this expression in an heroic sense, to which I fear you and I are not very likely to attain. He said, "I die daily," because every day he deliberately put his life in jeopardy for the cause of Jesus Christ. One day he went into the Jewish synagogue, knowing that in all probability they would drag him out, scourge him with rods, or, perhaps, in fanatic zeal, stone him to death. Another day he was found in the street preaching to a multitude of idolaters, and denouncing their gods, irritating them by exposing their vices, and by advancing truths of God which were novelties, and so contrary to their prejudices, that they could not endure them. Behold him often crossing the sea in a frail ship, or passing over rugged mountains among robbers. He was often in peril from the mountain-torrents, and from cold and nakedness; in all places he lived the life of one whose neck was always on the block; who stood ready at any minute to offer himself up as a sacrifice for Christ. In these more silken days we cannot run such serious risks, and it is to our shame that there are some who are not *willing* to run even the *little* risks which the times may demand. We know professors who cannot imperil their business by an admission of their faith, and others who cannot venture the breaking of some fond connection for the sake of the cross of Christ. Alas, there are many who are ashamed of Jesus because a father or a mother or a brother might, perhaps, ridicule them, or sneer at them; they are ashamed to bear the loss of anything, when our apostle *rejoiced* to suffer the loss of *all* things, and did count them but dung that he might win Christ! May the heroic age of Christianity return to us, and even if it should be necessary that the furnace should be heated once again, yet if God's gold may but glow with that clear, bright luster which it exhibited in the former days, we may well be satisfied with the fury of the blazing coals! The persecuted were happy men despite their sorrows; they were honored men notwithstanding their shame; they were

earth's princes, heaven's peers, for they could say that for Christ's sake they every day were delivered unto death, but did rejoice, and were exceedingly glad that they were privileged to suffer for the cross of Christ.

Our text we shall now take in a *spiritual* sense. Neither fixing our minds upon its universal sense, nor yet upon its mournful, nor even upon its heroic meaning, but taking it in a *spiritual* way common to all the saints, "I die daily." Our subject this morning is the art and mystery of dying every day. First, *we shall notice some previous necessities for the practice of this art;* secondly *we shall speak upon in which this art consists;* and thirdly, *upon the great benefits which will accrue to those who shall learn to die daily.*

I. First, there are **CERTAIN THINGS PREVIOUSLY NECESSARY** before a man can be a scholar in this great art of dying everyday.

The first necessity is that he must be *willing* to die; if he shall shrink at death, and covet life, and dread even the *thought* of departure, it will be a miserable necessity to him that he will have to die someday; but he will not be at all likely to be an apt pupil in the art of dying today, and tomorrow, and the next day, and every day that he lives. With a natural disinclination, with an awful fear, and a terrible shrinking from the very fact of dissolution, he will not be at all forward to bring his mind to find delight and satisfaction in contemplation of the grave. In order that a man should be willing to die daily, he must be a saved man; he must have his sins forgiven, and he must know it by infallible assurance or else death will be to him, of all things, the most terrible. He must be clad in the righteousness of Jesus Christ as with armor of proof, and he must know that he has it on, or else death will be a dart that will afflict him terribly, and from it he will shrink with all his soul. He must be a man perfectly at peace with his Creator, not ashamed to look into his Maker's face in Christ Jesus, nor afraid to stand before

Jehovah's solemn bar. He must, in fact, have looked by faith to the blood-stained cross, and he must have seen Jesus making a full atonement there, for sin; he must have accepted that atonement as being made for *him;* he must be resting on it with an unstaggering faith, believing that all his sin is put away through that one dread sacrifice; he must know that the righteousness of Christ is wrapped about him, and that he is accepted in the Beloved, or else to talk to him of dying daily would be somewhat analogous to inviting the thief to be hanged daily, or asking a culprit to be arrested daily. It will be enough, he thinks, to endure once that dread sharp stroke which will separate him from his joys; he certainly will not predict and anticipate the period, but be glad to forget it while he can, crying, "Let us drown care, and live while we live."

Yet more is necessary than this to make a good student of the art of daily dying; a man must not only submissively await his dissolution, but he must be even *desirous* of departure, and *cheered* with the hope of the better land! A hard thing, you say, yet not impossible; impossible, perhaps, to *nature*, for it shrinks from the hard thought of dissolution, but possible enough to divine grace, for grace overlooks the temporary separation, anticipating the bright resurrection and the everlasting glory. To an ungodly man, to die can never be a thing to be desired, for what remains for him after death? His possessions go from him; like birds that have rested for a little while upon the field, but take to their wings when the traveler claps his hands, so all the worldling's riches must take to themselves wings and fly away. And what remains for the sinner in the next world? A fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation! Ungodly men and women, you know what you have to expect when you shall be called to the unknown land to face the Judge upon His throne! You will be condemned, banished, accursed, executed, and destroyed forever! It is not possible that death

should be a welcome thing to drunks and unclean persons, or even to merely *moral* men. But the believer; what of him? To him death is gain! What he loses of comfort here, is made up to him a thousand fold by the joys of the hereafter; he knows that for him there is the crown of triumph, and the palm of victory; for him the harp of ecstatic joy; for him the robe of immaculate purity; for him a place at the right hand of God, even the Father, in eternal security and ineffable delight! Therefore the Christian not only regards death as a necessity through which he hopes to be supported as a patient through a painful operation, but he *looks for his departure* as an heir looks forward to the day of his majority; as the bride anticipates her wedding day. It is the time when his manhood shall burst its shell, when his imprisoned soul shall snap its fetters, when that which was long like a shriveled corn, shall bud and blossom, and bear sweet fruit in the garden of God. When he is in his right mind, and his faith is in active exercise, he longs to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better! Endowed with such a longing, he becomes an apt pupil in the art of dying daily.

Once more, if a man would learn to die daily, it is necessary that he should have *a good understanding and a clear knowledge as to what death really is,* and what are the matters that follow upon it. Nothing is more becoming our study than the departure of our souls from this mortal stage to the immortal glory. What is it to die? Is it to cease to be? If it were so, then indeed, we should be idiotic to speak of dying *daily*. To die—is it to part with every comfort, and lose every joy? If it were so, and we had to be driven forth from the body as naked spirits, houseless, restless, drifted about with everlasting winds, we might indeed be excused if we shut our eyes to the dreary prospect. To die is nothing but for the soul to be separated from the body. The body remains to rest in the grave, and mold back to mother earth while the soul ascends *immediately* to God who gave it—

to be at once with Jesus, *immediately in paradise,* without the body; a disembodied spirit, naked for a time, but yet most sweetly blessed! To die is, in its after consequences, to wait a little in a state of bliss, and then at the trump of the archangel, to return to put on the body again—the same body which was buried, the same in identity but marvelously changed, as changed as the flower from the seed, or the crocus with its golden cup from the bulb which was put into the soil. I say our souls shall come back to their bodies to a new marriage. The spirit and the body shall be knit together once again, so that our manhood shall be again whole—body, soul, and spirit, all being in glory even as we are here on earth, but far more gloriously developed. Believers in Christ know that the first resurrection delivers them from all fear of second death; we shall reign with Christ upon the earth; a thousand years of glory shall be given unto the saints—on this same globe in which they suffered with their Master, they shall triumph with Him! Then in the last time when Jesus shall have delivered up the kingdom unto God, even the Father, then the people of God shall reign forever and ever in unsurpassed and unimaginable delight! This it is, then, to die. There is nothing dreadful at all about it; it is altogether the very simplest of operations, although it involves afterwards the most wonderful results. I suppose that to die is but a pin's prick, or less than that; the pains which we call dying pains are really pains caused by *life's* struggles to hold its own. *Death gives us no pain whatever;* it is the relaxing that lulls us into a blessed slumber; it is the obstinate grasp of life within us which causes all the agony of separation, but as soon as life relaxes its stern grip, grief is ended. As for death, his hand is gentle and tender, and to those who know him, his voice is music, and his countenance a delight!

Now, Christian, if you can get an intelligent view of what dying is, and a clear view of what will follow dying, you will

then be able to learn to die daily; and by the grace of God you may yet be able to achieve it, and every day before you have mingled with the din of this world's turmoil, you may bathe in Jordan's river, and be refreshed!

II. Secondly, **WHEREIN DOES DYING DAILY CONSIST?** Many things go to make up this high achievement.

The first is to consider with much care, every day *the certainty of death to all those who shall not remain at the coming of Christ,* and to let the certainty of our own death or change go with us as an undivided companion. We ought always to feel that we are mortal; it should be to us a garment that we never shake off; the fact that we are here but as sojourners and wayfarers should be painted on our eyeballs. We are never right-hearted when we imagine that we are abiding inhabitants of this land; we are but strangers and sojourners in it; we are only right when we act as such. The Lord, knowing that we should try to shake off the remembrance of death, has so helped us as almost to *force* us to it; we have before us the frequent departures of others; the path to the cemetery is well trod. It is well for us that we live not always in the house of feasting—the grave's brink is a healthier resort than the table of luxury. Just think how often you have seen strong men who appeared to be as likely to live as yourselves, taken away in their strength! How often have we marked others sickening gradually before our eyes like slowly fading lilies! God rings the funeral knell in our ears, and bids us remember that the bell may next toll for us. Our dying friends cast their shadows over us, and cool our worldly heats and madness; in the presence of the corpse we gather up our skirts, and gird up the loins of our mind, because as surely as the soul is gone from yonder lifeless body, we too, must follow. We have no lease on life; we have no earthly immortality guaranteed to us. Let us then, remember the myriads who have

marched before us; let us keep their track before our eyes, feeling that we are wending our way to the same goal.

The whole of nature around us also helps us to remember that we are mortal. Look at the year, it is born amid the songs of birds, and the beauty of flowers; it comes to its ripeness, and luscious fruits, and shouts of harvest home, but soon the old age of autumn comes, and a lamentation is heard, "The harvest is passed, and the summer is ended." Amidst the fall of decaying leaves, and the howling of the cold winds of winter, the year finds its end, and so, too, with each day. Well does Herbert sing—

"Sweet day, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew must weep your fall tonight,
For you must die."

Every flower we see lavishing its fragrance on the breeze trembles because it hears the footsteps of death! It blooms that it may wither; "Its root is ever in its grave, and it must die." Where do you see immortal things beneath the moon? Lift up your eyes; look where you may; don't you see everywhere change and mutability, and departure written upon nature's brow? And God hangs all this up, as it were, as a notice upon the wall—like the mystic characters which amazed Belshazzar, that we may not dare to forget that it is appointed unto all men once to die. No, as if this were not all, not only is nature full of helps to make us familiar with the grave, but our own *bodies* also tell us of our appointed change. What is that gray hair but the beginning, the first sign, and the token of the coming winter which shall freeze the life current within the veins, and chill the heart itself? What is that loosened tooth but a part of the fabric crumbling to let us know that the whole tenement must soon

come down? What are those aches and pains, and what that decay of the eyesight, and that dullness of hearing; what are those tottering knees, and why that cane, but that we may receive clear warnings that the whole tabernacle is shaking in the rude winds of time, and must soon totter to its fall? The Lord will not allow us to win a freehold here; He puts affliction into our family and disease into our flesh in order that we may seek after a better country, even a heavenly one. Let me exhort you then, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, seeing you have all these mementoes to keep the lamp of the sepulcher always burning in your chambers, to be well acquainted with the shroud and the winding sheet. Every time you take off your clothes at night, think how you must be unrobed for your last narrow bed. And when you put on your garments in the morning, familiarize yourself with the time of the resurrection, when you shall put on your glittering garments in which you are to rejoice forever. Do not, I pray you, put aside these reflections because at first sight they may seem somber; familiarize yourself a little with the gray tints of death, and they will brighten before your eyes; and before long you will see a transcendent beauty in such meditations to which you would not be a stranger if you could! Thus the first part of dying daily is to think constantly of death.

The next part of dying daily is *to put your soul, by faith, through the whole process of death.* It is a wise thing to sit down quietly, and to picture your departure; you need not stretch your fancy much; you have seen the same with others, you can picture it for yourselves. There you lie, upon that bed grown hard with weeks of weariness, and loving watchers whisper in the silent chamber; they are anxious that you should not catch the sound, but your quick ear hears it, and you wistfully inquire, "What does the physician say?" You gather, though they tell you not, that you must soon depart; as a believer in Jesus you are glad

to hear it! You have had enough of this world; you are like a child tired out with its day's play, and you are glad to fall asleep upon your father's breast. The solemn article comes nearer and nearer, the pulse is fainter; you have enough consciousness left to perceive that the eye is being glazed, and outward objects are lost; perhaps you have also enough strength to sing your last song, for heaven has met you while you are yet here, and your soul is flooded with a joy you never knew before! You have evidently arrived at the border land, for there are flowers beneath your feet, the like of which never bloomed in the wilderness, and you hear songs such as you never before heard in the desert. Then you, yourself, begin to sing. Perhaps it is some such song as this—

"And when you hear my eye-strings break,
How sweet the minutes roll;
A mortal paleness on my cheeks,
But glory in my soul,"

or perhaps you burst out with a song concerning the New Jerusalem, "your happy home," name ever dear to you; and you rejoice that you are about to end your labors in the joy and peace which remains for the people of God.

The solemn instant has come, but will you be able, precisely, to distinguish it? May there not be so sweet a gradation from the earnest of the Spirit, to the bliss itself, that at no exact moment shall there be a wrench from time to eternity? All may be so divinely ordered that pilgrims may advance by degrees from the tabernacle of earth to the temple of heaven; there will be a matchless change, but it will not necessarily be a shock to the spirit—the folding gates of paradise may be opened by degrees, so that our eyes may be gradually prepared to endure the excessive glory. But while we

linger, the spirit has mounted. Now, oh, joy of joys, you are in His bosom, who loved you with an everlasting love! The hand that embraces you still wears the nail print, and as you bow to kiss those sacred feet, and cast the crown which has been placed upon your head before that man, that God, you see that the feet are the feet of Him who was nailed to the tree for you. What joy! What blessedness to see that your Father smiles upon you! The Spirit of God fills you, and you know Him, and you grieve Him no more! The Son of God gives you to partake in all His glory, for you are with Him where He is! Now be sure that you rehearse such thoughts as these as though they were a sacred drama in which you are soon to take your part; traverse the azure way; plume your wings for the last solemn flight; let faith, like a courier, march before to track the way. Every semblance of affectation upon dying beds is shocking. I have never been able to admire the oft-quoted deathbed of Addison. "Come," he said, "and see how a Christian can die." It seems to me too like a *boast* to be a fitting utterance for a soul humbly resting at the feet of the cross, and looking out over the black waters which fringe the eternal shore. The true idea of a Christian's dying speech is a humble and gracious witness to those who look around, that though a sinner, he has found peace with God through the precious blood of Jesus, and would have others trust in the same Savior. *Prepare to deliver such a testimony!* Often picture yourself as bidding adieu to every earthborn thing; anticipate the final stroke, the upward mounting, the soaring through tracts unknown, the sight of the Judgment throne, the eternal beatific vision, and so will you die daily.

But we have not come into the soul of the matter yet. The way to die daily, practically, is to hold this world with a very loose hand. When a man wins a little gain in this world, it sticks to him like birdlime; it holds him; it prevents his aspiring to

heavenly things, and it holds him bound to earth. Our dear friends and our beloved children are all strong chains, binding our eagle-souls to the rock of earth. "Ah!" said one, as he was shown a rich man's ample house and luxuriant gardens, "these are the things that make it hard to die"; and I suppose they are, when they are misused, and wrongly applied, they birdlime us—they hold us to the soil when we would wish to mount. But, brothers and sisters, you must not be the servants of the present. Look on your lands as a dying man would look on them; look on your children, and the comforts of your fireside, and your little savings, as so much hoar-frost to vanish in the sun; look on your hourly cares, and daily joys as on things which perish with use—mere visions of the night, things that flit at the rising of the sun. You will never enjoy earth rightly unless you know it to be a poor mutable thing; earthliness eats as does a canker, and if you become so great a fool as to think that mortal things are *eternal*, or that you, yourself, will long endure, you will reserve for yourself many sorrows. See you not how the glittering dew drops exhale as the day grows old—such and as fleeting are human joys! Mark how the meteor marks the brow of night, and soon is seen no more—such and as hasty is mortal bliss! Hold not earth's treasures with too firm a grasp; give them all up to your Father, and use them as temporary comforts borrowed for a while, to be returned soon. Our bereavements would not be half as sharp if we always viewed our friends as being lent to us; a man does not cry when he has to return a tool which he has borrowed; no, but as an honest man, he knew he borrowed it; he never called it his own, and he hands it back, thankful that he has had it so long. When you weep, who have lost your friends, you do well, but if you carry that weeping to murmuring, you ought to remember the mercy of God in letting you retain these dear ones at all, and in sparing them to you so long; and you should mourn that a rebellions

spirit should so reign in you as to make you complain because your God takes back His own. Gracious souls rejoice to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

To die daily, then, is to hold this world with a loose hand, and to look upon earthly possessions as fickle joys. To die daily, again, is to test our hope and our experience very solemnly everyday. Alas, for that evil habit of taking our religion for granted; of looking back to some period a few years ago, and believing that we were then converted; and reckoning that it must be all right now because of something that happened then. brothers and sisters, it is most mischievous to live in the past, and to be afraid, at any moment, to try our faith by *present* tests; we may live on experience if we will use experience in its proper place, but any man who is afraid to search present evidences, and to try the foundation of his faith before God, today, is treating his soul most wretchedly. How would you like to die today, dear friend? Would you like to die with a hope too weak and tender to endure to be questioned? Can you enter into eternity with a hope that you dare not put into the crucible? Oh, no, you feel you need sure work when it comes to the last; you need a safe and stable foundation to build your soul upon in the trying moment! Well, then, beloved, see that your hope is stable *now*. Each day examine yourself whether you are in the faith; whether you have really repented of sin; whether you have actually and truly laid hold of Jesus Christ. Search! See whether the root of the matter is in you, and the fruits of the Spirit proceeding from you—whether God dwells in you—whether you walk after the flesh, or walk after the Spirit. I would not foment doubts and fears, but I would, above all things, press professors to avoid presumption; the man who is in a sound business does not object to overhaul his stock, and examine his books, but the man to whom bankruptcy is

eminent, generally seeks to shut his eyes to his actual position. O sirs, if you are right with God, you will desire to be quite sure; you will not flinch at heart-searching preaching; you will be anxious to be put into the sieve, and to be tried even as by fire; your prayer will be, "Cleanse me, O God, from secret faults; search me and try me, and know my ways!" You will not be among those who hunt after prophets with smooth tongues who prophesy in gentle strains; you will not desire to have your cradle rocked, that you may be lulled into presumption, but you will labor to make sure work for eternity lest you suffer irreparable loss. Beloved, do this every day! Look into the mirror of the Word, and see what manner of men you are; purge yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and of your spirit; put yourself under the lash of the severest texts of Scripture, and by all means labor that you are not deceived, for God will not be mocked, but will deal with you according to *facts*.

To die daily, it will be necessary that you come everyday, just as you did at conversion, to the cross of Christ, as a poor guilty sinner, and rest in Him. I do not know anything that is more delightful, more necessary, or more profitable than a renewal of the *look of faith*. I have always found, when I have been in fear as to my safety, or have had hard thoughts of death pressing heavily upon me, that my only resort has been a humble resort to the atonement. Carey ordered that they should write on his tombstone—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall.
He is my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."

Here is an epitaph for each one of us! Just come with nothing of your own—no good feelings, and no good works; fall before the cross of Jesus, and rest there; take Jesus to be everything that God's law, and your conscience can require. I think, dear friends, this is the way to die daily, and if you can always live as an empty sinner filled with the fullness of Christ, as a lost sinner saved wholly by a precious Savior, you are then fit to live, and fit to die!

But I have not quite concluded. To die daily, the Christian should take care to be always in such a place and situation that he should not be ashamed to die therein; therefore, the possessor of faith in Jesus Christ has no license to be found in places of ungodly and unclean amusement. How would he like to die there? The old story has it that the devil once carried off a very hopeful young man, hurrying him on a sudden to hell; a monk of great saintliness called after the devil, "You have taken one of mine; you have no business with him!" "Well," said Satan, "I found him in the theater; he was on my premises, and I took him." I should not wonder if many a professor is carried off in that style! If professors of religion go astray into the neighborhoods of iniquity, no wonder if they are shot at by that old hunter after souls! Where your treasure is, there your heart is. Tell me where you go to find your amusement, and I will tell you what you are—for where a man finds his highest joy, there his heart most truly abides. It may serve you as a guide when you have to question yourself, "Ought I to do this, or to go to this or that place?" Then ask yourself, "Should I be prepared to die in such company, and in such an occupation?" If you could not, leave it alone; if you would, you may fairly go.

The Christian, also, should never be in a state of temper in which he would be ashamed to die. Who would like to die bearing malice against any man? Who would wish to die with hard thoughts of a neighbor? Who would like to die in a passion?

You have no business to get into a passion at any time, but to die daily; the aim and strife of a Christian should be to keep himself in that delightfully equable frame of mind in which he should be prepared, at any moment, to stand before his God with his present emotions and feelings upon him. You say that is hard work? So it is, but you have a glorious helper—the Holy Spirit shall enable you, and by His power you may accomplish miracles of holiness! To die daily a Christian should have all his affairs in such a condition that he is ready to die. I admire that habit in Whitefield, who was a man so very orderly, that he would not go to bed at night until everything was in order, for he said, "I should not like to die with a pair of gloves out of place." And yet I know some believers who have not made their wills! And if they were to die today, and they may, their property would go far otherwise than it ought to do, and a wife whom they love so well might be put to serious suffering. A Christian has no right to leave his affairs in a tangle; if he cares not for the affairs of his own household, he is worse than a heathen and a publican! Many traders keep their business transactions in such a mess, that if they were taken away their very character might be impugned—but such should not be! We must set our house in order, for we must die, and not live; we should watch because the Master comes as a thief, and a good servant would wish to have all things in good order at his Lord's appearing.

So should it be with all our acts towards God. Some of you have not yet fulfilled the Master's command with regard to baptism. Now, if you died unbaptized, you would be saved, but still, I am sure you would not wish to be taken away till you had fulfilled your Master's bidding. Make haste, then, and delay not to keep His commandments.

Some of you have dear children who are unconverted, and you have not spoken to them about their souls. Now, if you

were called this afternoon to sleep upon the bed of death, I am sure you would wish that you had delivered your soul fully to these dear ones. This afternoon, then, call them into your room, and plead with them. A thousand other things may press upon your conscience, but you have been putting them off—attend to them, I pray you, at once—as a dying man should do! Who would wish to die with a duty left undone? I would like to depart when the day's work is quite finished. It is said that that venerable divine, Watts Wilkinson, asked of God that he might never know consciously what it was to die, and he died, as many of you will remember, in his sleep, so that his admission into heaven must have been almost without any recognition of death. In his case death was swallowed up in victory. Perhaps such an end may be given to us; I would choose so to die, that I should have nothing to disturb my mind of matters left undone, but be found waiting and ready. If we are thus prepared, we have acquired the art of dying daily.

III. What would be **THE PRACTICAL BENEFIT** of such daily dying? It will help us to live well, and this is no small matter; we would not be covetous and grasping if we knew that the heap would soon melt, or we should be taken from it; we would not be so impetuous, and attach so much importance to trifles if we felt that there were grander things close at our heels; we would not be so obstinate, and take so long to be persuaded to Christian duty if we felt that the time was short, and it behooved us to get much done in a little time; if we saw our candle flickering in its socket, we would be far more diligent; we should not be so groveling, and so earthly if we saw that the world is founded on the floods, and therefore is utterly unstable. Next to living close to Christ, I do not know of any better prescription for overcoming worldly-mindedness than this dying everyday. He whose mind anticipates a departure to be with Jesus is armed with weapons for fighting a good warfare.

But mark, brothers and sisters, the best practical effect is that *it would help us to die*. No man would find it difficult to die who died everyday! He would have practiced it so often, that he would only have to die but once more—like the singer who has been through his rehearsals, and is perfect in his part; he has but to pour forth the notes once and for all, and have done. Happy are they who every morning go down to Jordan's brink, and wade into the stream in fellowship with Christ, dying in the Lord's death, being crucified on His cross, and raised in His resurrection! They, when they shall climb their Pisgah, shall behold nothing but what has been long familiar to them—as they have studied the map of death.

I do not know how wide the benefits of dying daily may be, but they seem to me to be commensurate with the whole period of human existence. You young people, you would not be likely to plunge into youthful gaieties to your own damage if you felt that you might die while yet you are young; that wild oat sowing would never cause you a harvest of regrets if you felt that you might perish in the midst of sin! Graves are often short trenches for little prattlers. Beware you boys and girls! You men of middle age, how it would check you in that eager pursuit after gold, that hastening to be rich which never leaves a man innocent, if you felt that it is little matter, after all, to gain wealth since so soon you must be parted from it. And you who totter on a staff, I cannot conceive of anything which would keep you in a holier frame of mind, or in a happier and calmer state, than to be always dying the death of Jesus, that you might live His life!

Put the Christian in any position and this art of dying daily will he useful to him. Is he rich? He will not be purse proud because he knows that he must soon be removed from all his treasures. Is he poor? He will not murmur, for he recollects the streets of gold which are so speedily to be his portion! This is

useful to a Christian in all pursuits; if he is seeking after knowledge, as he may, he will mingle with it the knowledge of Christ crucified, for he knows that all else will not serve him; if he is toiling for a livelihood, as he may, and as he *should*, he will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, because these things last when all else shall perish like faded leaves.

Make a believer a king or a pauper, and the art of dying daily will help him in either position! And whether he shall rule as a potentate, or suffer as a slave, dying daily will be an equal benefit to his soul. Put him under every temptation, and this will help him, for he will not be tempted by the offers of so brief a happiness—his soul has a grip upon *eternal* realities, and vain shows it utterly despises. "See here, tempter," he says, "I have a kingdom which cannot pass away; vain is your offer of the kingdoms of this world. See here, foul fiend, I have the beauty, and the joy which never can fade—why tempt me with these vanities, these painted nothings?" Above temptation's billows the believer lifts his head with calm joy, because he breathes the atmosphere of heaven! Daily dying is as useful to the saint in his joys as in his griefs, in his exaltations as in his depressions; it is a blessed thing for him in the valley, and on the mountain, in strength, and in sickness, on the battlefield of activity, or in the hospital of suffering; he shall be tutored for immortality, trained for bliss, fitted for heaven by learning to die daily! God teach us this art, and He shall have the glory of it. Amen.

829 THE PERFUMING OF THE HEART – ROM. 5:5

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Sept. 6th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." — Romans 5:5

THE APOSTLE sets before us a ladder like that which Jacob saw; the foot rests upon the earth, but the top ascends to heaven. Tribulation is the foot, but we mount as we see that it works patience, and we climb again, for patience works experience; and we ascend yet once again, for experience sustains hope, and hope that makes not ashamed climbs up to the very heart of God, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. I might compare these verses to those songs of degrees which were sung by the people as they went up to the temple, as they halted at each stage of the pilgrimage, they sang a fresh Psalm, and so David said, "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appears before God." The pilgrim sets out from the dull and desolate vale of tribulation; he journeys on to patience, and lifts up his Psalm under the shadow of the rock. He removes his tent, and journeys on to experience—beneath its wells, and palm trees he refreshes himself; soon he marches on again from experience to hope, and never stops till the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, and he has reached the New

Jerusalem where he worships the ever blessed God, and drinks full draughts of His eternal love.

In this text it seems to me as though our great Melchisedec, the Lord Jesus, came forth to refresh His warring and wayfaring people with bread and wine. You read of tribulations; these are the battles of the faithful, and in them they overcome even as Abraham overthrew the kings, and made them as driven stubble before his bow. The Lord's warriors are often faint and weary in them, but the love of God is graciously shed abroad in their hearts; and this is that sacred bread and wine that refreshes the Lord's people in their time of hunger; it becomes a sweet morsel to refresh them by the way, and keep them in good spirits till they eat the heavenly bread, and drink the new wine all fresh and sparkling at the table of the marriage banquet. There they shall sit forever and ever with the glorious Bridegroom.

This morning, if we may be so helped of the Holy Spirit, we shall first of all, say a little *upon the love of God;* then upon the love of God *shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit;* and then upon the *confirmation which this gives to our hope,* since the apostle tells us that our hope is not ashamed for this reason—that the love of God cheers and sustains us, being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

I. First, then, some little upon **THE LOVE OF GOD**—a theme for breadth and depth like unto the vast Atlantic, whereon my little skiff loses itself as a mere speck on the infinite expanse! How shall I profess fully to express truths of God so vast that the greatest divines might lose themselves, and the most eloquent of speakers might fail? The love of God—how shall I attempt to speak of it? I must but skim the surface! To dive into its depths were impossible for me.

Think, for a minute, first of all, of what it is—the love of God. Now the *pity* of God towards the suffering, I can

understand because of the goodness of His nature; the *kindness* of God towards the needy, I can comprehend because of the liberality of His character; that He should have *compassion* upon such as are ignorant and out of the way; that He should look constantly with tenderness upon those who are sorely broken, and ready to perish, is easy enough for me to believe, but this is *not* what is spoken of in the text. It is not compassion, nor tenderness, nor pity—it is LOVE—which is something *more* than all these! You pity the beggar whom you could not love; you have compassion upon the villain in whom you could have no complacency; you look with tenderness upon sufferers who have nothing in their character or in their persons to attract your affection. Men usually think that they have gone far enough when they have rendered kindness; even if the heart glows with no affection, they as a rule, take this to be the rendering of *love* towards their neighbor. When they have permitted their compassion and tenderness to exhibit themselves, they feel that all is done that is demanded of them. But the text speaks not of this, but of *love*—direct attachment and affection—and of the love of *God!* I beseech you, my brothers and sisters, as you sit here, lift up your souls, bid your understandings stand on tiptoe, and endeavor fully to grasp the idea of *divine love*. If you are in Christ Jesus this day, God loves you, but to what shall I liken love as it streams from the heart of Jehovah? We try to guess at what God's love to one of His people may be by our love to our own children, to our spouse, to our friend. Now, in a far higher degree and sublime sense, and after a loftier sort, even so God loves the people of His choice; consider this, believer, and be astonished that love should come from God to such a one as yourself! The Lord loves *you;* He has complacency and a delight in *you; You* give *Him* pleasure; He watches for your good; you are one of His household; your name is written on His heart; He loves you!

Can you catch the thought? If so, there is no praise that can express your gratitude, solemn silence will perhaps be the only vehicle that shall seem fitting for your soul's adoration! Revolve the personal thought again and again in your soul; He that made the heavens and the earth loves *you!* He whose angels fly as lightning to obey His behests, the tramp of whose marching shakes both heaven and earth, whose smile is heaven, and whose frown is hell, loves *you.* Infinite, almighty, omniscient, eternal, a mind inconceivable, a Spirit that is not to be comprehended—but He, even He, has set His love upon the sons of men, and upon *you*. Let each believer say in his heart, "Upon me among the rest." Oh, but this is astounding, this is marvelous! He has said to us what He never said to angels, for unto which of the angels said He at any time, "You are My son"? To which of all the glorified spirits has He said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you"? Where do you read that He shed His blood for angels, or poured out His heart for seraphim and cherubim?—

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."

God's dearest love has been hoarded up for worms, saved for the creatures of a day, reserved for us poor short-lived things who are, and are not—that we should be favored above all that live! It is not for tongues to tell out this wonder, but spiritual minds helped from on high may feel in solemn stillness, what a mystery is here.

If you would have this morning, this love shed abroad in your hearts, I must ask you to consider carefully who it is that loves you, namely, the Most High God! To be loved, I have already said, is a sublime thought, but to be loved of Him is a

right royal thing, surpassing thought as far as the heaven is above the earth! A courtier will often think it quite enough for him if he has the favor of his prince; what does that favor mean? It means riches, it means pleasure, it means honor; all that the courtier needs is wrapped up in the royal smile. And, believer, what does the love of the King of kings mean to you? If you estimate it rightly, not only all that you now need, but all that you can *ever* need—all that the flights of fancy or the conceptions of understanding can bring before you are contained in that one fact, the Lord loves you! When Jehovah loves, He brings His power to help His love; He brings His infinite wisdom to contrive ways for delighting the objects of His choice, and every other attribute of His transcendent nature works and co-operates with His love for the good of the chosen ones; you have all things if you have your Father's love, O child of God. Here all your aspirations may sit down content— to be loved of God is enough, and more than enough, for the largest wish. Caesar's imperial couch is hard compared with the bosom of God—Caesar's scepter is a cumbersome thing compared with the ring of God's love which surrounds our finger. Give us but the Father's love, and whoever will may have the Indies! Yes, let the worlds be given to whom God may please, as men give husks to swine, if we may but have His love, it is enough—our soul is filled to the brim, and flows over with satisfaction. Consider, I say, who it is that loves you, and surely your heart will leap at the very sound of His name, and feel it to be a matchless thing to be loved of Jehovah, the only living God.

Think yet again, of *what He is who so loves you*; very much of the value of affection depends upon the object from whom it comes. It would be a very small thing, certainly, to have the complacency of some of our fellow creatures, whose judgment is so perverted that their praise might almost be considered

censure! To have the love of the good, the holy, and the excellent—this is truest wealth, and so to enjoy the love of *God* is an utterly priceless thing! No mention can be made of coral, and as for rubies, they shall not be mentioned in comparison therewith. God, the thrice holy One, who cannot love that which is unholy and defiled, cannot take complacency in that which is contrary to Himself, yet looks on us through His Son, and viewing us in Christ Jesus, sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel, and, therefore, can love us with complacency and delight. Oh, how this exalts us! We are *nothing* in ourselves, but how this makes us feel the gentleness of the Lord in making such base things to be so great by merely loving them! Don't you see how graciously the Lord can fit a man to *be* loved, and then can shed abroad within his heart an abundance of love which would have been an unknown thing unless divine grace had changed and renewed it? To be loved of God! O sirs, some think it a great thing to be applauded of the crowd, but watch the breath of the multitude, how soon it is blown aside! From men upon whom it was most lavished, from them it is soon taken. What do you think of the approval of the wisest and best of men? What is their wisdom but folly in the sight of God? And what is their approbation often but a mistake? But to be approved of Him before whom the heavens are not pure, and who charged His angels with folly; beloved, this is such a thing as might make you sit down and lose yourselves in blissful meditation even until you found yourselves in heaven!

Still farther to lead your minds into this love of God *let me remind you of the remarkable characteristics of that love.* The love of God towards His people is a heaven-born affection; it sprang from no source but itself; God loves His people because He will love them, and for no other reason known to us. Divine love is not caused by any excellence in the *creature*, either created or foreseen—its springs are within itself! We do not believe in

the eternity and self-existence of matter, but we do believe in the eternity and self-existence of divine love! The Godhead seeks no reason for love to fallen men beyond its own determination and purpose. The Lord chose His people at the first in the exercise of His sovereign will. He loved them then, because "He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." He then united them to Christ, and viewing them as Christ's bride—beholding them as members of Jesus' body, He loved them with divine complacency—the love not springing from anything in *them*, but altogether from that which is within Himself, and in His own dear Son. His love is a causeless love as far as outward causes are concerned—caused only by the fact that God in His nature and essence is love!

As this love was uncreated, so it is *self-sustaining;* it is like Deity itself; it borrows nothing from without; it bears its life and strength within its own heart. The Lord loves you today, Christian, not because of anything *you* are doing, or *being* or *saying* or *thinking;* He loves you because His great heart is full of love and it runs over to you. I rejoice to think that this love sits on no precarious throne nor borrows leave to be; it lives, and shall live as long as *God* lives! None shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! And so long as God exists, this fire of His love, fed upon its own fuel, unsupplied by any human hands, shall continue to flame forth towards the chosen seed.

This love, too, it is sweet to remember, is utterly unbounded, and altogether unequalled. You cannot say of God's love, it has gone so far, and shall go no further; it is impossible to conceive a point beyond its glorious tide, but if there were such a point, it would yet reach it, for the love of God glories to be without limit of any kind towards His people. He loves us much better than we love our children, for we often love them so badly, that we bring them up to evil, and we

tolerate them in sin. He loves us better than we love ourselves, for self-love it is that ruins us, but God's love it is that saves us, and lifts us up to heaven, and to perfection. There is no love that can any more be compared with God's than the faint gleam of a candle can be likened to the blaze of the sun at noonday. He loves His people so much that He gives them all that He has. Earth, with all its providential arrangements, He consecrates to them that all things may work together for their good. Heaven itself He gives them, and since He wills it so, they shall even sit upon the throne of Christ, to reign with Him. As for His own Son, His choicest and greatest treasure, a treasure the like of which heaven and earth could not match—"God spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all. How shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?" The divine love has no shore. Enterprising mariner, your thought may spread its sail, and catch the favoring wind of the eternal Spirit, but if you shall fly on and on, forever and forever over ceaseless waves of new discovery, yet shall you never find a limit either to the infinite God or to His infinite love, for the two are as one! As the Father has loved Christ, even so has He loved His people, and herein let them rejoice, for they rest. A love without a parallel! Blessed be God for it!

So, beloved, let us reflect, too, that this love is unvarying and unsleeping; He never loves them *less;* He cannot love them more; God loves each one of His people as much as if there were only that one created being in all heaven or earth, and as if there were no other object for Him to set His love upon, for the multiplicity of the saints does not diminish the infinite love which each one enjoys. The Lord would not love better the one—the only redeemed one—if but one had been bought with blood, than He loves each one ransomed from the fall. A greater excess of love there cannot be! God loves His people with all His heart—lessening of His love there shall not be, for

He has said that there is neither variableness nor shadow of a turning with the Father of lights. He changes not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. Brothers and sisters, how sweet it is to think that though a mother's love towards a child cannot, when her weariness has worn her out, keep her awake every night when the child is sick, and perhaps the little one may be in great need while the mother necessarily is asleep—yet this can never happen to our God! No fatigue, no exhaustion, no faintness can ever make a pause in the Lord's loving oversight of the believers! Never for a single moment does He forget His church; His heart always beats high towards His elect, and at every moment He shows Himself strong for the defense of those who trust Him. If there were a minute in which God left you, child of God, you might, indeed, be wretched! But since there is no such period, rejoice exceedingly in the daily presence of your heavenly Father, and endeavor to walk worthy of it; let every day be a holy day bright with the light of this constant love of God; put on your garments as though they were priestly vestments; go forth to your daily labor as to religious service; go to your house as to a temple; come here to the assembly of God's saints like a great congregation of priests who come together on the feasts of the Most High to offer sacrifices to their ever present God. Well may you, into whose eyes this love has gleamed, and upon whose hearts the divine warmth of this love is perpetually streaming, live after a nobler fashion than the common herd of men!

Lastly upon this matter of the love of God, we triumphantly believe that it is undying and unfailing. God will never cease to love the objects of His choice. They shall grow gray with age, but not His love; they shall live on when this poor earth has melted, and the elements have dissolved, but His love shall remain with them! It shall not perish in the

conflagration, nor shall the covenant of His divine grace be consumed; they shall live on when the universe has gone back to its original nothingness, if so the Lord ordains it, but in the eternities to come, still shall that love of God be ever fresh and ever new. To my mind it always seems to be the very sweetest part of the gospel, that when the love of God has once been shed abroad in a man's soul, and he has really enjoyed it, and known by the witness of the Holy Spirit, that he is the object of the divine affection, there is no fear that he shall ever be driven from the divine presence, or become an outcast and an apostate, for whom Jesus loves, He loves even to the end. He keeps the feet of His saints; none of those who trust in Him shall be desolate; He gives unto His sheep *eternal Life*, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. "Because I live, you shall live also," He says. Oh, precious truth of God! The very marrow and fatness of the word of God! May you have the grace to *feel* it, as well as *believe* it; to *rejoice* in it as well as *understand* it; and so may the love of God be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which He has given unto you.

II. THE LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD.

Shall we try to illustrate these words by common things? Here is an alabaster box of very precious ointment; it holds within the costly frankincense of the love of God—but we know nothing of it, for it is closed up, a mystery, a secret. The Holy Spirit opens the box, and now the fragrance fills the chamber in which the 10,000 times 10,000s of the elect are sitting, for now the love of God is shed abroad. Every spiritual taste perceives it! Heaven and earth are perfumed with it! Frequently at the great Roman games, the emperors in order to gratify the citizens of Rome, would cause sweet perfumes to be rained down upon them through the awning which covered the amphitheatre. Behold the vases, the huge vessels of perfume! Yes, but there is nothing here to delight you as long as the jars

are sealed; but let the vases be opened, and the vessels be poured out—and let the drops of perfumed rain begin to descend, and everyone is refreshed and gratified. Such is the love of God. There is richness and fullness in it, but it is not perceived till the Spirit of God pours it out like a rain of fragrance over the heads and hearts of all the living children of God. See, then, the need of having the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit!

Observe that no one can shed abroad the love of God in the heart but the Holy Spirit; it is He who first puts it there. Men live in neglect of this love till He first impresses them with a sense of the value of it, and they continue to seek after it in vain till He opens the door, and introduces them into the secret chamber of its mystery. It is the Holy Spirit who educates us in the art of divine love! Not a letter can we read in God's love-book till we are taught of the Holy Spirit; He is the great Master of the house, the great Steward bringing forth the precious things of God to our souls. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Spirit; much less can a man be assumed that he is the object of eternal love but by a revelation made to him by the Holy Spirit who makes this delightful truth of God clear to his mind.

Do you inquire in what way is the love of God shed abroad? I reply that to the best of my knowledge and experience, the gracious operation is somewhat upon this wise—the Holy Spirit enables the man to be assured that he is an object of the divine love in the first place; the man comes to the cross as a guilty sinner, looks up to the five wounds—those dear fountains of pardoning grace—trusts himself in the living Savior's hands, and then he cries, "I am saved, for I have God's promise to that effect! Now, since I am saved, I must have been the object of the Lord's love! There must have been a marvelous love which gave that blessed Son of God to bleed

for me." The man does not doubt it; he is assured of it in his own spirit, and then the Spirit of God, whose operations are far beyond all our knowledge, confirms the testimony of his conscience. We need not attempt to comprehend the working of the Holy Spirit, for as we know not even how the wind blows; much less shall we know how the Comforter works. But this we know, that He adds a confirmatory testimony to the witness of our own hearts; He bears witness with our spirits that we are born of God, and so we become *infallibly,* and beyond all possibility of mistake, assured that the love of God is ours, and that we have a part and an interest in it.

Then, the next thing the Spirit of God does, is to make the man clearly understand what kind of love this is which God gives to him; He leads him not all at once, perhaps, but by degrees, into all the truths of God. He takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to the believer's heart, till the believer understands that this love of God to him is such a love as I have been describing just now. He clearly perceives Jehovah's love in its length and breadth, and height—and wonders at it for all the marvels which it has worked! This admirable enlightenment is no small part of the shedding abroad of the love of God; a man must *know* before he can enjoy, and in proportion as the eyes of his understanding are opened, will he be able to enter into the delightful experience of the secret love of Jesus.

And then comes the point—the essence of the matter—the Holy Spirit enables the soul to *meditate* upon this love. He casts out the cares of the world, lifts it up above doubts and fears, and temptations; He makes a blessed quiet, a divine Sabbath within the heart—and then the man, while he meditates finds a fire begins to burn within his soul! Meditating yet more, he is, as it were, carried off his feet, lifted up from the things of the earth; still meditating, and considering, and

weighing, he comes to be amazed—he marvels, he is astonished, and then he is filled with strong emotion. He is devoutly grateful.

"Blessed be the Lord," he says, "Who has remembered my low estate, and has loved one so unworthy." He breaks out into a song like that of the Virgin, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Then while gratitude is still within his soul, a divine resignation to the Master's will keeps rule within him. "Jehovah loves me; then what does it matter if every bone should ache, and the heart should throb, and the head be heavy? What does it matter if the cottage walls are bare, and the table is but scantily furnished? My Father, do as You will!" Then follows a rapturous leaping over this devout calm; an unutterable joy, next akin to heaven, fills the heart—and this joy sometimes takes the character of *ecstasy* until whether the man is in the body or out of the body, he cannot tell, only God knows! Then if he is alone, perhaps time flies, and he seems to anticipate eternity, forgetting the lapse of hours; and if he is in company with others, his lips teach many; his words are better than pearls and his sentences than strings of coral. The Master's love makes him to wear a brightness about his countenance, and a transfiguration glory about his character which others who have tasted of the like, understand, but which to the worldling seems to be the effect of madness or of drunkenness with new wine—like that of the famous Pentecostal morning! Yes, brothers and sisters, if you know what it is to have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, you will perhaps wonder that I cannot paint it better, but I would like any of you to try! You shall find it far easier to *enjoy* it than to *depict* it, for this seems to me to be one of those things in its heights and depths which it would be almost unlawful for a man to utter! This master-thought of Jehovah's love to us bears us as on eagles' wings; it takes us up

beyond the smoke, and din, and dust of this poor world; it sets us in the heavenly places at the right hand of Christ. It enthrones us! It puts a crown upon our head! It ennobles us, wraps us about with the white linen that we are to wear forever! It makes us, while yet we are poor, to be as angels in the midst of the sons of men! May the Lord give us this soul-elevating influence more and more; may this transcendent experience be our constant and daily enjoyment as we are ripening for heaven, and it will not be long before the gates of pearl shall open to admit us into the presence of God for which this experience is a most fitting preparation!

III. Lastly, this inexpressible sweetness of which we have spoken becomes **THE CONFIRMATION OF OUR HOPE**.

Hope rests itself mainly upon that which is not seen; it builds itself upon the promises of God, which eyes have not beheld. Still it is exceedingly sweet to us, while we are in this body, if we receive some evidence and token of divine love which we can positively enjoy even now. You remember Master Bunyan in the Pilgrim, how he writes the dialog which took place when the Pilgrim was met by Atheist? Atheist snaps his fingers, and he cries with jeer and laugh, "You fools! You are seeking for a New Jerusalem and there is no such place! I have been seeking this city these 20 years, but find no more of it than I did the day I first set out; I tell you there is no such thing as a world beyond the stream; there are no harps of gold, no brightness—you are deceived men." "But," said Hopeful, "how say you so? Did we not see the gate of the city from the Delectable Mountains?" He might have added, "I do remember, when I stood with the shepherds on the top of Mount Clear that I saw the city; I looked through the telescope, and I saw it, and therefore I am *not* deceived; I follow after that which my eyes have gazed upon." See you then how the present enjoyments of divine love in the soul become to us arguments

for the reality of the things which we are hoping for—and our hope is not ashamed because God gives to us, even here, such emotions of spiritual delight, that we anticipate the raptures of the hereafter, and confidently press forward to reach the promised rest! Why, blessed be God, there are some of us who do not need Butler's Analogy, or Paley's Evidences to back our faith; we have our own analogy and our own evidences within our own souls, written by the Holy Spirit on the day when we tasted that the Lord is gracious! No Jesus Christ!? With whom, then, have we spoken all these years, and upon whose bosom have we leaned? No Holy Spirit!? What mysterious agency, then, is that which strings the chords of our soul, and fetches superhuman music from them, causing us to delight in sublime and celestial themes to which once we were strangers? What is that power which casts us down to the earth in solemn awe of the Great Invisible, and then again bears us out of ourselves up to the seventh heaven? No Father God!? Tell not His children so barefaced a lie!

It was not long ago, I am informed, that a certain infidel lecturer gave an opportunity to persons to reply to him after the lecture, and he was, of course, expecting that some young men would rise to bring the general arguments for Christianity which he was quite prepared to overturn and laugh at. But an old lady, carrying a basket, and wearing an ancient bonnet, and altogether dressed in the antique fashion which marked both her age, and her poverty, came on the platform. Putting down her basket and umbrella, she began, and said, "I paid three-pence to hear of something better than Jesus Christ, and I have not heard it; now let me tell you what religion has done for me, and then tell me something better, or else you've cheated me out of the three-pence which I paid to come in. Now," she said, "I've been a widow 40 years; I had 10 children, and I trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ in the depth of poverty, and He appeared

for me, and comforted me, and helped me to bring up my children so that they have grown up and turned out respectable. I was often very sorely pressed, but my prayers were heard by my Father in heaven, and I was always delivered. Now you are going to tell me something better than that? Better for a poor woman like me? I have been to the Lord, sometimes, when I've been very low, indeed, and there's been scarcely anything for us to eat, and I've always found His providence has been good and kind to me. And when I lay very sick—I thought I was dying, and my heart was ready to break at leaving my poor fatherless little ones, there was nothing kept me up but the thought of Jesus and His faithful love to my poor soul! And you tell me it was all a mistake? Now, tell me something better, or else why do you cheat us of these three-pence? Tell us something better." Well, poor soul, the lecturer was a good hand at an *argument,* but such a mode of controversy was novel and not readily met, and therefore he gave up the contest, and merely said, really the dear old woman was so happy in her deception that he should not like to undeceive her. "No," she said, "that won't do. Facts are facts; Jesus Christ has been all this to me, and I could not sit down in the hall and hear you talk against Him without coming and saying this, and asking you whether you could tell me something better than what He has done for me. I've tried and proved Him, and that's more than you have." Ah! It *is* that! It is *the testing and proving of God!* It is the getting the love of God really shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit which affords us an argument which cannot be answered! Experience is the iron file against which the viper breaks his teeth, but cannot prevail! God gives us, even here, a foretaste of heaven's supernatural enjoyment in the forms of peace, calm, bliss, exultation and delight! This may seem fanatical talk to some, and a mere dream to others, but, sirs, we are as honest men as you are, and we as much claim to be

believed when we assert that we enjoy these things, as you claim our credence when you make an assertion; and if this convinces you not, and you still doubt us, rest assured that it convinces *us*, and that shall suffice! The love of God shed abroad in the heart makes our hope so that it is not ashamed.

See, brothers and sisters, the love of God is often shed abroad in the heart when we are very sick. When pain is most severe, joy has often been at its fullest; this love has come to paupers in the union house, and turned the workhouse into a palace; it has come to the dying in the hospitals, and made the wards to ring with heavenly music! It has come to some of us in nights of the deepest depression through which the human mind could pass, and it has lifted us right up out of the mist and the cloud, and set us in the sunlight of God! Now, these things coming at such times tend greatly to make the child of God feel that his hope is as sure in the dark, as it is in the light, and that he can trust his God though all things should seem to belie the promise. These things are of such an elevated nature that they help to maintain an elevated hope; if our comforts were gross and carnal—to be received by the mouth or by the ears, of what service would they be to that high and holy hope which comes from God Himself? But the enjoyments of which I have been speaking in the reception of the divine love in the heart are so elevating that they precisely suit the character of our hope, and our hope is confirmed, for, beloved, a sense of the love of God confirms everything that we hope for! If God loves me, then I am forgiven! If God loves me, then I am secure! If God loves me, then my circumstances are well ordered! If God loves me, then He will bear me through my trials! If God loves me, then He will keep me from the touch of sin! If God loves me, He will not allow temptation to overcome me, but He will keep me pure and holy, and receive me to Himself at the last! If God loves me, then the heaven which He has

prepared for His people must be mine, and with those who have gone before, I shall see His face! I shall drink draughts of His love, and be with Him forever and ever! Like a master-key that locks up every lock in the house, so does the sense of the love of God lock up every treasure in the covenant of grace! And if we have it within us, it affords us admission to every blessed thing, so that we may take at our will, and rejoice in God on account of it!

Now I have no more to say upon this point, upon which I have spoken so exceedingly feebly to my own consciousness. But I would to God that you all knew, *spiritually,* even the little that I can tell you. To hear of divine love with the *ear* is nothing—it is like the rattle of the dishes in the ear of a hungry man when there is nothing given to him to eat; to understand this *theoretically* is nothing: it is like being able to cast up thousands of pounds upon the slate, but having not a farthing in the purse. My dear hearer, what is *your* hope? What are *you* resting upon? Has your hope anything to do with the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit? Depend upon it—if your hope is founded on *anything* that you have done for yourself, or that any *man* may do for you—it will not excite in your soul a sense of the love of God! The thought of it, if it is a mere ceremonial hope, will excite no such emotions as those I have described; but if your hope is true and genuine, fixed on the Rock of Ages, built on the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then the thought of that hope will make *you love God*—and a sense of God's love to you will sway you to obedient service! Such a hope will endure the hour of trial, but no other hope will.

And what will you do if your hope shall fail you? What will you do if, at last, you are made ashamed of your hope? O see then, sirs! See, then, the overwhelming downfall which awaits you! The house was hastily built; it was fair and lofty, with

many-colored windows, and fine gables, and rare ornaments, but the floods are out! The rain descends! The wind blows, and where is the palace now? Its foundation was on sand, and it is gone like a dream! See the fragments of it floating down the torrent, while the owners are washed away and lost! And so shall it be with your fine hopes, O self-righteous or careless! O build on rock, on the rock of what *Christ* has done; build with a humble faith; build with His earnest love; build not with wood, hay and stubble, but build with gold, silver, and precious stones of His love, and trust, and holy fear! And when the deluge comes, you shall laugh at it, and sing in the midst of storm, for God is your preserver and under His wings shall you trust.

Ah, I would that everyone now listening to this voice could enter into so bright a hope, and enjoy such a love! And if they long to do so, behold the open door! The entrance into a good hope is by the door of divine love! And would you see divine love? There it shines in its resplendence on yonder cross where the Son of God, made flesh, gave His hands to the nails, and His feet to be fastened to the wood. There, where every nerve is a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on; where His whole body is tortured with pangs unutterable, and the soul pressed as beneath the feet of Deity, in the winepress of eternal wrath! There, sinner, *there* is your hope! Not your tears, but *His* blood! Not your sufferings, but *His* woes! Not your penance, but *His* agonies! Not your life nor your death, but *His* life and death. O look to Him! "There's life in a look at the Crucified One." Guilty one, depraved one, you all but damned one— look through the mists of Satan's temptations, and the dews of your tears—look to Jesus dying on Calvary, and you shall live this day! God help you by His blessed Spirit so to look—yours shall be the salvation, and His the honor of it. Amen and Amen!

830 GRAY HAIRS – HOS. 7:9

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Sept. 13th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not."
— Hosea 7:9

THE PROPHET HERE testified that the kingdom of Israel had learned the way of the surrounding heathen, and had polluted itself with their vices, and consequently the strength of the kingdom had decayed; he declares that he could discern signs of this decay—signs as manifest and certain as gray hairs which mark the decline of life, yet the inhabitants of the realm of Israel had not observed their decline, but had boasted of their strength when all the while it was departing from them. We need not go into any particulars as to that little kingdom which after a while was swept away by Assyria, but there is no doubt that what happened to them happens to many a nation—it may happen unto our own! Before we are aware of it, the scepter may depart from Britain; a general laxity of commercial morality may, by degrees, sap and undermine the foundation of our commerce, and before we are aware, our industry may be crippled, our trade withdrawn, and our position among the nations debased. If so, we shall fall by our *sins*, and by our *sins* alone. Certainly such has often been the case with churches. It was notoriously so with that presided over by the bishop of Rome; the sins of that modern Babylon came not all at once,

but by slow degrees; first, it submitted itself to one vain dogma of man's invention, then to a superstitious decree of a haughty council, then to a third invention of a potent pontiff, and so by degrees the church apostatized until it ceased to be a church, and became the persecutor of the saints! Thus after their own fashion has it been with some of our churches at home. Zealous and active, prayerful and united, they grew every day like cedars which the Lord has planted, and they were a blessing to the neighborhood in which they stood, but discord crept in, or worldliness, or pride, and by-and-by the Holy Spirit departed—the ministry became barren, the people looked up to the shepherd, and they were not fed. Soon the church was scattered abroad, the light was blown out, and the place that once was blessed by the church knew it no more. May this never be written in the history of *this* church! May gray hairs never come upon its head at all, or if they should come, may we have divine grace to perceive them at once, and resort unto the Holy Spirit for strength so that we may be saved from driveling into imbecility or apostatizing into error!

But I shall not discourse of nations this morning, nor yet of churches. To handle such extensive themes might rather interest than edify. I shall now speak of *individuals!* Brothers and sisters let us turn our thoughts to *ourselves*. It is an excellent rule for the hearer, as well as the minister concerning a text, to apply *himself to the text,* and then, secondly, to apply the *text to himself.* Keep your thoughts to the text, and then when you have drawn out its meaning, let all that it has to say be spoken in your own ears as addressed personally to you. I pray that God the Holy Spirit may stir us up to self-examination—that if any strange sin or evil passion may have devoured our strength, at any rate we may know it, and drive out the traitor at once!

First, this morning, I shall endeavor to explain the reason for *the ignorance mentioned in the text,* "yet he knows not." Secondly,

I shall hold up the mirror, *that every Ephraim here may see his gray hairs.* And then, thirdly, I shall *recommend remedies for this gradual decay.*

I. Let me **EXPLAIN THE IGNORANCE** here mentioned, or show how it is that many a man is backsliding and declining in divine grace, and yet knows it not.

I take it that this is often caused by a lack of acquaintance with one's own soul. It is said that in London we do not know our next door neighbors, but it is a stranger thing that we should not know *ourselves*—that the soul should be so closely allied to the body as to be even married to it, and yet man scarcely gives his nobler part a thought, but lives as if he were a horse or a cow! You have never *seen* your soul, and yet it is yourself! How is it you have lived so long, O man, without giving to your immortal spirit some consideration, some hours of thought, some studious moments? And you, O Christian, how is it that you, saved as you profess to be by an immense price; you who have received quickening from the Holy Spirit, that you think so little of soul affairs? We open our eyes in the morning, and right on until we close them at night we scarcely look for anything but that which is external and of the body. Would it not be well if we could open our *spiritual* eyes, too, and gaze into ourselves, and understand what business is going on in the world of souls, what vice increases, or what virtue declines within our hearts? I am afraid we give our thoughts so much to this *world,* that the next world is neglected; if there is but a scratch on the hand, if there is but a pimple on the flesh, timid folks must need send for the surgeon, but ah, they can let the souls be wounded, and a deadly gangrene come upon them—and they send not unto the beloved Physician that He would come and heal them of their diseases! Everywhere we see among men a great lack of acquaintance with their souls, a great forgetfulness of the motto of the old Delphic oracle,

"man, know yourself," and consequently it is that men decline almost unto spiritual death, and yet scarcely know it!

Some there are, again, who do not *want* to know any evil thing of themselves. They had rather suppose themselves to be rich, than actually know the true condition. "No," they say, "bring not the daybook! Show me not the ledger! I am spending now as if I were a wealthy man, and living at a lavish rate; I do not want to know that I am nearly a bankrupt—I had rather not perceive it." Hear how these wounded ones dread to be dealt with honestly, and therefore cry, "Surgeon, film over the sore; that shall be enough for me; I want not the knife; I care not to have my wound radically healed." Fools are they who talk thus, and yet how such fools abound! My hearer, are you one of this tribe? Are you content to have a fair name to live? Are you satisfied to dream that you are rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing, while you are in reality naked, and poor, and miserable? If so, the Lord have mercy upon you, and make you enough your own friend to be willing to know the truth of your state!

Many see not the gray hairs because they do not look into the mirror to see them; we cannot very well perceive gray hairs without the use of the mirror, or our sins without the mirror of the word of God. Many professors search not the Scriptures; they will never win the blessing of the first Psalm, for they are not day and night found reading God's word; they do not come unto this book, which is God's mirror which He hangs up in the chambers of His people, that they may see the *natural* face, and perceive what manner of men they are. Oh, these unread Bibles! These neglected Bibles—how they cry out against us! What swift witnesses will they be against many professors in the last heart-searching day! What? Does God give us a gauge by which we may measure ourselves, and will we not use it? Does He send us these detectors and tell-tales by which we may

discover whether all is well with us or not, and will we close our eyes, and refuse to see? Oh, then, if we die and utterly perish, surely our blood must be upon our own head! He who will not be saved must be damned! He who will not take the trouble to look into the mirror shall have no one to blame if the undiscovered evil brings him into grievous ill and irretrievable mischief!

There are some, again, who look into the mirror to see whether there are gray hairs coming, but they use a false mirror, one which does not truly reflect the image. I mean this—that multitudes of Christians use a standard other than Holy Scripture, of what a Christian ought to be! They compare themselves among *themselves*, and they are not wise. They say, "I am as holy, I am as unworldly, I am as conscientious, I am as prayerful as So-and-So." Perhaps they even boast that they have more spirituality of mind than such a one—and being content to have excelled their fellow creatures, they cannot conceive that there can be gray hairs upon themselves, and so their pride is flattered, and their soul is thus cankered through and through by a false conception of what they should be. It is well for us, beloved, all of us, to aim high; it is said that he who shoots at the moon, if he does not hit it, will at any rate shoot higher than he who aims at a bush, and so he who aims at absolute *perfection*, if he should not attain it, may, at any rate, be something better than he who takes some poor imperfect friend of his, and makes *him* to be a standard. Break your false mirrors! Throw away your flattering mirrors, and take to the clear crystal of the word of God! There see what Jesus was, and ask yourselves how near, or rather how *far* you are from being like He! Look at the Son of God, the image of *perfection*, and hear Him say, "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," and blush as you see your deformities, your sins, your gray hairs! And so blushing, may God bless you!

I am ashamed to have to say one more thing, namely, that some men who are decaying in strength do not see their spiritual gray hairs, because they dye themselves so thoroughly. I mean that they color themselves with hypocrisy. There are men who, if every hair were gray, would still wear raven locks in their own judgment, and the judgment of others—for they are masters of deceit. There are some who, if we speak of private prayer, retire into their closets as regularly as others, but yet they never draw near to God in spirit and in truth. How many there are who are as apparently devout in the externals of religion as if they were the children of God, while all the while they are formalists, and Pharisees without the root of the matter in them. It is the easiest thing in the entire world to counterfeit the issues of the mint of heaven! Yes, and to pass the spurious coin among your fellow creatures. And to make them *think* that you are far richer than they in gracious things, while all the while your virtue is counterfeit, and your profession a lie! O my hearers take care of putting formal prayer, sham holiness, and imitation godliness into the place of the real fruits of the Spirit! You must be not merely washed and cleansed, but "born-again!" You must undergo a radical change, and you must serve the living God in the power of His eternal Spirit—not with the tongue, and with profession only, but with *heart*, and soul, and strength, or else your religion will be nothing but a funeral pall to cover your dead soul, and help to increase the pomp with which you shall be carried to hell. God save us from hiding from ourselves our secret faults! Let us be willing to be spoken to by the rough preacher's stern voice; let us be greedy to read those passages of Scripture which try us most; let it be our prayer, "Search me, O God, and try my heart." Daily and hourly let us desire to feel the refining fire go through our soul. Come with the fan in Your hand, O Savior, and

thoroughly purge my floor, and let my chaff be driven away! And let nothing but the pure wheat remain!

Thus I have, as briefly as I could, shown you why it is that many, perhaps of ourselves, may have well-marked decay in our souls, and yet we may not know it.

II. Secondly, I am to **HOLD UP THE MIRROR**.

Remember, brothers and sisters that decays in divine grace, and backsliding are usually very much like the fall of the autumn leaves. You are watching the trees, for now they are beginning to indicate the coming fall; they evidently know that their verdant robes are to be stripped from them, for they are casting off their first loose vestments; how slowly the time of the brown leaf comes on! You notice here and there a tinge of the copper hue, and soon the gold leaf or the bronze is apparent; week after week you observe that the general fall of the leaves is drawing nearer, but it is a matter that creeps slowly on. And so with backsliders; they are not put out of the visible church all at once; they do not become open offenders all at once. The heart, by slow degrees, turns aside from the living God, and then at last comes the outward sin, and the outward shame. God save us from falling by little and little! The devil's little strokes have felled many great oaks; constant droppings of temptation have worn away many stones. God save us from it! Some cities have been carried by storm. Brave soldiers have made the irons of the scaling ladder bite on the top of the wall, and up they have swarmed in defiance of death, and carried the city by sudden force within a few hours. But many other cities have been taken by the slow process of the siege—the supplies have been cut off, warriors have been slain at the gate, slowly. Entrenchments have been thrown up nearer and nearer to the wall; tunnels have been dug under the bastions; forts have been weakened, gates have been shaken—and at last the city has been subdued. Where Satan captures one man by force of

strong temptation, he captures 10 by the gradual process of sapping and undermining the principles which should rule within. May God preserve us from this! The cunning fowler can adapt his arts to suit our case, and if some of us may be taken by a sudden surprise, he understands how to draw the bow, and bring us down. But if others are to be entrapped by being accustomed to the lure, he will occupy weeks, and months, and years, for he counts no time lost so that he may bring a child of God to shame, and bring disgrace to the name of Jesus! I will, then, hold up the mirror to let those see their own hearts, in whom the evil is insinuating itself by degrees.

One of the gray hairs which marks decay is *a lack of holy grief for daily sin.* Comes not this close to home for some of you? "Repentance? Why," says one, "I repented when I was converted." What, and not since then? Why, repentance and faith go hand in hand to heaven! A Christian must never leave off repenting, for I fear he never leaves off sinning. Where there is none of the dew of repentance, there is one sign of a curse. Gilboa's mountain was barren because on it there was no dew, and what shall I say of you who have lost the dew of repentance? What? Can you grieve your God, and not grieve yourselves? What? Can you go into your business, and know that you have spoken and acted amiss, and when you come home at night are there no lamenting and confession? Have sin and you grown so friendly that you can carry this viper in your bosom? Your God is a jealous God, and if He sees that you treat sin so lightly, rest assured He will make you smart before long, and withdraw His Holy Spirit from you—and leave you to grope in darkness. There is perhaps not a more common gray hair than this, and yet there is not one which more surely indicates that the constitution of the Christian is being secretly undermined. If you see this evil in the mirror, God give you

grace to repent over your lack of repentance, and to weep that you do not weep for sin!

A second gray hair is *the absence of lamentation in the soul when Jesus Christ is dishonored by others.* Time was with some of us when, if we saw others sin, we could sit down and cry our heart out at our eyes—we could not bear the thought that thousands of our fellow creatures should be living in continual neglect of our precious Lord Jesus! We thought we could lay down our lives or a hundred lives if we had them, if we might but make Him a throne in men's hearts, and write His name on the very skies, so that everyone that ran might read it! But now we hear of sin, and it does not fill us with holy horror as it once did. Perhaps, dear hearer, you can hear the precious name of Jesus dishonored, and yet your soul is not pierced through and through as with a dart. Ah, if you truly loved the Master, it would be a painful thing to live in such a wicked world as this! If you loved the sweet Lord Jesus, your heart would yearn over those who see not His beauty, and to whom He is as "a root out of a dry ground." Shame on us! Shame most of all on *myself* that I can walk through these streets of London without tears! Jesus saw Jerusalem and wept, but what was Jerusalem? A petty village compared with London! And yet He wept over it! Have we no tears for a city with equal light, and with equal sin, and with a population multiplied so many times?—

"Did Christ over sinners weep,
And can our cheeks be dry?"

Yes, they are dry—dry from year in to year out—and scarcely a sigh or cry for poor dying souls is heard from some of us! We can be satisfied to have our friends saved, and our children, and a few neighbors saved, but as for the rest, we talk as if they were delivered over to ruin by God's decree—and we

satisfy ourselves with vain drivel about *sovereignty*, or some other idle conjecture! And we do not mourn or lament, though hell is filling, and Christ's name is blasphemed, and the Lord's Day disregarded, and I know not what of infamy committed beneath the light of the moon! It is a sure sign that our divine grace is not at flood tide, but sadly at the ebb, when there is no grieving over the sins of others.

A third gray hair in the Christian, a very plain one, and marking that the disease is gone far, is the indulgence of certain minor sins. I call them *minor* only because they are supposed to be so. When a thief finds that he cannot enter the door of a good man's house, and that the windows are so barred up that there is no entrance for him, what does he do, but, finding that there is a little window through which a child might creep, he fetches a boy, and passes him through the narrow opening. And then the child opens the door to the man, and the house is plundered. Even so, when Satan cannot overthrow a believer with the gross sins of the flesh, he is certain to find some lesser evil which he introduces through an unguarded place—and then the lesser sin opens the door for the next! You know the process of the wedge; try to put the blunt end of the wedge into the timber, and how useless it would be; but put in the thin edge first—give it but a gentle stroke with the hammer, and then again, and again, and again—and see how it cleaves its way, widening little by little. So some professors begin with a little conformity to the world. "Oh!" they say, "I cannot see the harm of it," though others of their fellow Christians are grieved; then they come to the next, and the next, and the next; and so by slow degrees they give up virtually all the truthfulness of their profession, and make shipwreck of faith, and are castaways—because the grace of God was not truly in them, but only notionally so. While others who go a certain distance in the road to apostasy are met by divine grace, and turned back,

not without many broken bones, and much sore lamentation all the later days of their life.

Covetousness, which few men will confess, is yet a very common gray hair upon the heads of professors. Beware of a growing covetousness, for covetousness is of all sins, one of the most insidious; it is like the silting up of a river. As the river comes down from the land, it brings with it sand and earth, and it deposits all these at its mouth; and by degrees, unless the conservators watch it carefully, it will block itself up, and it will be difficult to find a channel for ships of great tonnage. You cannot see when the river closes its own mouth, but so it is—by daily deposit it creates a bar which is dangerous to navigation. Many a man, when he begins to accumulate wealth, also begins to ruin his soul; and the more he deposits, the more he plugs up his generous spirit, which is, so to speak, the very mouth of his life; instead of doing *more* for God, he does less! The more he saves, the more he needs, and the more he needs of this world, the less he craves for the world to come. This disease creeps upon men as slowly as certain disorders which slumber in the blood for months until they find occasion to develop themselves. Watch against a grasping spirit, dear friends. If you find money sticks to your hands, mind what you are doing! It is all well enough for you to seek to make all you can rightly—you are bound to do so, and to use it properly, but when the gold begins to cleave to you, it will eat as does a canker, and will soon prove your ruin unless God prevents it.

With some it is not quite so much what we call covetousness, though it is the same sin, as it is *worldliness*. They are as much taken up with the little they have as some would be with their much—and as much drawn away from God by their losses as others would be by their gains. They are, from morning to night, always fretting and worrying about the things of this life. Our Lord's great text, "Be careful for nothing," they

have never understood. The first, last, and middle thoughts of their life are, "What shall we eat; what shall we drink; and how shall we be clothed?" They rise up early, and sit up late—they eat the bread of carefulness, but forget the Lord who alone can build the house. Do not some of you find yourselves falling into this fretful way? There was a time when it was not so. Oh, that hour of prayer—how you enjoyed it, but you clip it very short now! You say you cannot afford the time. Ah, that Thursday night lecture, that evening prayer meeting—how sweet those used to be, how you went home thanking God that there were such wells in the desert! But you cannot come out to them now— you are to pestered with cares, and even on the Sabbath your business intrudes itself into your thoughts! You have been making calculations in the pew this morning! You have been worrying yourself about interest, and discount, and mortgage, and commission. The stockbroker's din and the rate collector's knock have sounded in your ears! The fact is, my friend, you are growing worldly. Take a bright knife from your table, and dig with it into the earth in your garden—and leave it there—see how it will rust. This is what will become of your soul—put it into the earth, and keep it there—it must corrode! A man can do as much business as the wealthiest merchant in the world, and if he lives near to God, it will not hurt him; but a man can do a tin-pot business, as they say, and yet for all that, because he puts his soul into it, cares about it, worries over it, and departs from the living God, it will consume the graciousness of his soul, and take away all the sharpness of his Christian zeal, and all the brightness of the holy communion which he once had with his God. Beware of that gray hair! O my beloved brothers and sisters, I have held the mirror up! You can see the evil! Avoid it for the Lord's sake, and your own!

In some professors the gray hair of *envy* is very visible—yes, in some of the best, too. Some of God's servants are not

satisfied to serve God in their own way, but they must make it their aim to excel some other brother, and if that brother should happen to be more successful, or to be thought to be so, straightaway they feel jealous, and are apt to try and pick a hole in his coat, or pull a feather from his cap lest he should outshine them. This is the sin of some of the hardest workers in Christian churches! I wish we could all get the spirit of dear Mr. Dodd, the Puritan, who said, "I wish that I were the worst preacher in all England," by which he meant, "I wish they were all better than myself." He did not mean that he would like to be any worse than he was, but he desired that all his brothers might be better than himself. We ought to be like the old Roman, who, when another was elected to an office in preference to himself, thanked God that his country had better men than himself! So should we. But the spirit that was evinced in the days of Luther is often seen even in our churches—many confessed that Luther had proposed many excellent reforms, but they could not endure them because they were proposed, as they said, by a beggarly monk. At this time many would confess to the notable deed of a zealous brother, but then they must find fault because the man is so young. "How shall he be allowed to outstrip venerable sires?" Or, "He is such a poor man, who is he that he should be making such a to-do?" Or, "The man has never had an education, how dare he pretend to be useful?" This is very mean and despicable, and yet, alas, most common! Let us give no quarter to the foul spirit of envy; it is a devil with as many lives as a cat, and you will have to kill it a great many times over to get rid of it—and it must be slain. It is a gray hair of the most pernicious kind, for it marks a sad declension of soul from right walking with God.

Another gray hair is *pride*. When we think ourselves to be something, then we are nothing; when we boast within ourselves, "I have none of these gray hairs," we are then snow-

white with them! When we conceive that others might well take a pattern from us, we may soon be beacons to them; rocks always lie in the way of the ship of pride; when we write fine things *about* ourselves, we shall soon write bitter things *against* ourselves. A professor is never lower in the sight of God than when he is high in his own esteem.

Neglect of prayer, again, is another gray hair. When a town begins to decay in its commerce, its decline may come by slow degrees—careful watchers observe it, because they perceive that the ships in the harbor grow fewer and fewer. Our soul is the harbor, and our prayers are the vessels by which we trade between our souls and heaven—and when these prayers begin to be fewer, or are of lighter tonnage, when they make fewer voyages to the celestial haven, then be sure that our soul's spiritual trade is under a sad decay.

It is a gray hair, too, when we have *no delight in listening to the word of God, or reading it.* Time was with some of you when you would cheerfully stand in the aisles with the crowd to listen, and were glad, though you had not a place to lean against, if you might catch a good word from the Master. But now it must be a soft cushion, so you may sit easy, and the preacher must mind that he choose goodly similes, and choice words if he would hold your ear. You are dainty now; when you were hungry, you could eat gospel meat from the bone, cut how it might be! But now it must be daintily carved, or your stomach turns against it; when the appetite fails, the man's health is wrong, and he needs a tonic, and perhaps the Great Physician will before long send him a bitter draught which will bring him right.

Another gray hair is *lack of love to God*—when we think hard thoughts of Him because we are in trouble. When we do not seek His honor; when we can hear His name blasphemed without a feel of horror; when we do not, in fact, love Him as

a tender child loves a parent. O beloved, it is a sweet thing to love God! It is the true life of man, this love of God in the soul! It is a sweet thing when you can talk with Him, walk with Him, rejoice in Him, bless Him, praise Him, and hold Him to be good even in the darkest of His dispensations! But we do not love God as we should. O our dear God, our blessed Father, our tender Parent, whose truthfulness we have proved 10,000 times, and whose loving-kindnesses every day are innumerable—how little do we praise Him, how often do we complain of Him, how few good words do we speak to others concerning Him, and how ready are we, at the very first rebuff from Him, to murmur against Him! May our souls get to love God better, and this will be a sign that we are in a holy and happy state.

A *lack of love to believers* is another gray hair. They who love not the Father are not likely to love the children. Many professors seem to be entirely wrapped up in *themselves*. Their notion of religion is their own salvation, and their idea of zeal is simply seeing after their own prosperity. Brothers and sisters, see that you love one another! "Little children, love one another," said John, "for love is of God." And if you do not love the poor and needy of Christ's church, and the feeble and the suffering— yes, if your heart does not go out towards all in whom there is anything of Christ Jesus, depend upon it, you are not living as near to God as you should!

Again, lack of love *to perishing sinners* is a sad gray hair to be found, I fear, in some of us ministers, as well as in the people—would God it were not so! Ah, when we can think of the perishing, and yet are not dismayed on their account; when we refuse to speak the gospel to them; when we do not warn them; when we never pray for them; when our closets never witness to our sighs and cries for these poor souls that will so soon be damned, and cast away from all hope; when we can even think

of neighbors, children, friends perishing, and not feel any brokenness of spirit, nor pour out any lamentations over them—oh then, indeed, we must have forgotten the compassion of Jesus, and our heart must be terribly diseased! Look at the gray hair and ask God to deliver you from what it indicates.

One other gray hair is the *suspension of communion with God.* We sang of it just now—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?"

How wretched is it to follow Jesus afar off, and to be unable to say, "He brought me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love." When we can no more rejoice with the joy of them who make merry in His name, nor can weep at His feet, then have we turned aside, and may God in mercy bring us back again!

III. Two or three words shall suffice for the third point, namely, to recommend to you **CERTAIN REMEDIES.**

I would press it home upon any professor here who has seen gray hairs in the mirror I have held up, to make an inquiry as to whether he is a child of God or not, for these things go far to make us doubt whether we ever were born-again, and if this is a question, then all is at stake. Oh, I pray you ask the question, for it would be better for you to doubt and fear than to go to hell blindfolded with carnal security! Young people, you joined the church some years ago, and you thought then you felt deep repentance, conviction of sin, and a true faith in Christ. You have had two or three years to try yourself—how is it with you now? Is not the world getting the upper hand with

you? Does not that tempting offer of marriage almost persuade you to break the Lord's command not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers? Do not the pleasures of the world, which are so congenial to poor evil flesh and blood; do not they begin to fascinate you? Then ask yourselves, "Am I built on the rock, or is it a sandy foundation? Have I received the grace of God in truth, or am I under some fond delusion which is lulling my conscience for a while, and stupefying my reason? I beg you by the blessed God, by death, and by eternity—make sure work of it—see that you get to Christ, and not to a fancied peace! See that you possess true and living faith in a living Savior, and not a confidence based on mere excitement! I ask you that, because I believe the answer to that question may very much help you to get rid of these gray hairs.

Next, I beseech you *professors* who can honestly feel that you are converted, to remember what will be the result of decays in divine grace. You cannot always keep those decays inward—even if you could they would be mischievous; they will lose you the company of Christ; they will deprive you of the joy of the Lord; they will mar your prevalence in prayer; they will take away from you much of your usefulness in outward life, and do you know what it will come to in the long run, unless divine grace prevents? Why, these decays will begin to tell upon your outward conduct and conversation! Say not "I shall never be an open sinner"; little do you know what you will be! Those lips which vow today, "I will never deny Him," may yet deny Christ with oaths and curses! Who are you that you should be better than Peter? Do not you start at the thought of it? Then start at the sight of these gray hairs! Amend, I pray you, and return to God with grieving and repentance, to think you should already have so much departed from Him—or else your last end may be worse than the first!

I recommend to every *believer* here a *daily self-examination*. Pythagoras commanded his disciples three times every night, before they went to sleep, to go over the errors of the day, that they might see them and avoid them in the future. Repentance is a blessed grace. Mr. Rowland Hill used to say it was one of his regrets that he could not take repentance into heaven with him. It is so blessed a thing to weep under a sense of sin that we may say in the words of our hymn writer—

"Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin,
And after none but Thee.
And then I would, O that I might,
A constant weeper be."

Look at the great heinousness of the sin of departing from God! See sin in its true deformity and blackness, and repent of it!

Then with repentance join much *supplication*, especially supplication for the power of the Holy Spirit to be shed abroad in you. I do feel, brothers and sisters, as if few of us have ever entered into the power of religion; we are living in the *weakness* of it; we live on the outskirts! We have not pierced into the metropolitan city of intense vital godliness; we are like those poor Eskimos far away at the poles. O that we could reach the tropics of true godliness where the sun of divine grace should be vertical all the day long, and its divine heat should bring forth in our hearts all the tropical luxuriance of which renewed nature can be capable! We need to yield sweet fruits for Christ, delicious flowers, and all that human nature can produce when sanctified by the blessed Spirit! Oh, by supplication, seek to get more of the power of the Holy Spirit from on high, that you may get rid of these gray hairs!

Beloved, to our supplications let us add *renewed faith*. Let us go to Jesus as we went at the first. Living waters from that sacred well we may draw—waters which shall refresh us still! Let us go with the penitent's cry, beating on our breast because of our wanderings, and ask for restoration, and a fresh cleansing in the fountain which Jesus filled! Jesus is not slow to be entreated; He will bind up that which is broken; He will restore that which has gone astray.

And then to this prayer of faith, let us add a daily *watchful activity*. Let us guard ourselves that we slide not down the glassy precipice of declension; let us keep our feet with all diligence, and cry to the Great Keeper who alone can hold us up, and make us safe. And let us see to it, brothers and sisters, that we are not deluded into the idea that we can get to heaven safely and yet live at a distance from God; that so long as we are just saved, it will suffice. I charge you, brothers and sisters, rise! Let your motto be, "Superior," higher yet! Rise like eagles that God has trained to face the sun! Rise like angels whose abode is heaven! Get up! Get up, you lingerers in the valley! Ascend to clearer atmospheres, to do yet better service for your God! I long heavily for more divine grace to serve my Master, and more consecration to His service; and I wish the same for all of you. Let none of us be content to tarry down below in the marshland of the poor poverty-stricken religion of this present day—but let us climb the high mountains where the sun of God's grace is shining brightest—and stand there enjoying communion with Him, leaving the world. So shall gray hairs vanish, and so shall we, like the eagle, renew our youth.

Beloved, there is much that may strike the ungodly in this sermon as well as the believer—and I pray God to make it a two-edged sword to wound and to heal both. "Whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." There is the gospel! Receive it and live in the power of it! Amen.

831 THE ALTAR – MATT. 23:19

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Sept. 20th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"The altar that sanctifies the gift"— Matthew 23:19

HAD MAN REMAINED perfect, his communion with God would have been as unrestricted as that of an obedient child with an affectionate father. Adam might have worshiped his God acceptably anywhere, at any time, and in any mode he chose. Had there been literal offerings as well as sacrifices of praise, he might have brought before his God the delicious fruits of the garden, or poured forth libations from Eden's golden-sanded river; and these might have been presented on the high places of the earth, or in the shady groves, or amid the verdure of the plains, anywhere the Lord would have received the grateful offerings of men whose hearts were perfect towards Himself. But the fall intervened; man became a rebel to his King; man, by his depravity of nature, was placed far off from God, and his once unrestricted fellowship with heaven was brought to an end. Mercy gave tidings of renewed communion, but the good news came by slow degrees, and meanwhile, if man would approach his God, it must be under rules and regulations which would remind him of his changed estate. If he is permitted to draw near to his offended God at all, it is a great favor, and he shall be made to learn by the way of coming, how great that favor is; he shall, before a fuller

ceremonial is revealed, only be allowed to offer a *bleeding* sacrifice. He shall not present to God that which costs him nothing, the growth of the soil, but he must bring a *victim* from his flock or herd, and by his own hand he must cause the victim to suffer and die, for God will accept only a life poured forth in blood as a sacrifice from man, whose own life was forfeited to justice. And while rules and regulations were laid down as to sacrifices, *altars* were also under commandment— they must be built of earth or unhewn stone, and at the last all altars of burnt-offering were suppressed, save one only—the consecrated bronze altar of the tabernacle. All the rest of the world was left without altars. One spot was selected and only one; first in the place where the tabernacle was pitched, and afterwards the temple of Jerusalem, the altar for bloody sacrifice was set up; and everywhere else, when men offered to God on their high places, they did so in defiance of His command. Prophets might make exceptions to the rule, but for the many, the unbending rule was that *all* sacrifice must be made at the *one* holy altar.

Brothers and sisters, the *outward* truth of God clearly reveals to us its *inner* meaning; we must, had we remained innocent, have brought before God every day the thank-offerings of our hearts *without a mediator*, but we are guilty, and our holiest acts are the deeds of imperfect me, and our purest worship is the worship of fallen beings. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one! And before we can be accepted in our best things, there must be the shedding of the blood which takes away sin. There is no door of acceptance for us except through the merit of the Great Surety who solemnly laid down His life for His people! There is but one way by which we, who have been washed in the blood of Jesus, can offer unto God our humble service, and our loving hearts, namely, through Jesus Christ who stands as the type of that one

and only permitted altar! To Him we must bring ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God—for it is only by Jesus Christ that this reasonable service can be accepted of the Most High. In the one altar of the tabernacle or the temple, we see a type of the person and merit of our glorious Lord Jesus, and learn that apart from Him, there is no acceptable worship, for this is the truth of God which we desire, this morning, to teach.

Many mistakes have been made through applying the emblem of an altar to matters to which it has no correct reference; there was but *one* authorized altar of Jehovah, as we have already noted; that one altar finds its *fulfillment* in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, but through loose talking, if not through doctrinal error, other things have come to be called altars which are *not* so, certainly not such altars as meet the requirements of my text, for they do not *sanctify* the gift, and are not *greater* than the gift. Frequently have we seen the cross spoken of as an altar. Upon the cross, as upon an altar, our Lord is said to have been offered as the great sacrifice for sin, but the expression is mere poetic flourish, and nothing more. As a man, Jesus died on the cross, and the wood to which He was nailed was a *gallows*—not an altar! It was never appointed as such by God, nor is it ever so called in His word. The cross of wood was simply the *instrument* of our Savior's torture and death, and is no more to be reverenced than the whips of Pilate or the spit of the scoffers. The cross used at Calvary, and all other crosses, whether of wood, or stone, or gold, are no more to be esteemed than the same material shaped in circles or squares. Indeed, if we are to attach any kind of *moral* quality to the material, and visible form of the cross, it is rather a thing accursed than a thing to be blessed, for the divine curse fell on everyone that was hanged on a tree. Certainly this fancied altar of the cross in no way sanctified the victim; what honor did our

Lord Jesus derive from the tree on which He hung? What virtue came from this so-called altar to make God's unspeakable Gift acceptable? A piece of wood, and nothing more was that cross! It could give no sanctity to Christ, and we ought never to use words concerning that piece of timber which would in any way lead men to associate its material substance with the meritorious work of Christ. It is to be feared that the constant use of the emblem of the cross, in itself as innocent as an oval or a square, often leads men into a species of idolatry. When I see a cross embossed on Bibles, worked out in jewelry or fashioned gold, I cannot but think how contradictory it all seems—the cross, a thing of shame, the instrument of our Lord's execution by those who abhorred Him, and yet worn as an ornament! Surely men might as well wear at their belts the dagger with which their friend was stabbed! Why do not the ladies wear a gallows from their necks? For what more or less is a cross? Such was not the cross which Paul gloried in—he would have despised such idolatry! Paul gloried in the gospel, which is a spiritual cross, and he says of it, "By which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." Which of those cross-wearers was ever crucified to the world by the cross which dangles on their bosoms? The sign of the cross, when reverenced, is much the same as the bronze serpent when Israel fell to adoring it—it must be broken, and Christian people should discountenance its use. Clearly it is no altar! We occasionally read, and especially in poetry, of the "altar of the heart," but is not that also a misnomer, and may it not one day lead to doctrinal error? The heart, an altar? It certainly does not *sanctify* the gift! If there is anything in the gift that is acceptable to God, its sanctity must come from its being offered on a very different altar than that of our poor, corrupt, and depraved heart! I know the meaning is that *sincerity* makes our service acceptable, but I doubt the truth of that assertion, for however

sincere our devotions may be, *apart from the atonement of Jesus*, God does not accept them! There must be sincerity or there can be no offering made to God at all—but still, all the sincerity that ever dwelt in a human bosom could not make an offering to be received of God unless *faith* found an altar in *Jesus,* and relied for acceptance upon the grand sacrifice and finished atonement of the Mediator. Talk not quite so loosely lest mischief come of it.

A more common and dangerous mistake, however, is to call the *table* which is used for the purpose of the Lord's Supper an altar. If it had been called a house, or a horse, or an angel—any of those titles would have been quite as correct a name, for there is no likeness whatever between the table of communion and an altar! The mistake is offensive, and the mischief flowing from it is most terrible; all through Scripture we read of the communion table, but never find it either plainly, obscurely, directly, or indirectly called an altar. Jesus said, "The hand of him who betrays Me is with Me on the *table."* He did not say, "The traitor is officiating with Me at this *altar,"* and yet surely that first celebration was quite as complete as any which have succeeded it! Paul says, "You cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table and of the table of the devil," and that, too, in a connection in which he would surely have said the Lord's *altar* had the term been allowable; neither, except by the most violent straining can there be found any passage of Scripture which represents this table, used to celebrate a feast, as an altar for the consumption of a sacrifice. Indeed, what *sacrifice* do the modern priests place upon their so-called altars? See, they bring forth bread and wine—fit furniture for a *table,* but where are the fire and the wood for a burnt-offering? If the table is an altar, then according to our Lord, it is better and holier than the bread and wine placed upon it, for the "altar sanctifies the gift." And yet our modern ritualists will hardly venture to say that

their altars of wood and stone are really more holy than the body and blood of Jesus Christ which they profess to offer on them! I know not to what length folly may go, but one thing I marvel at— if these gentlemen need to have a material altar, why do they not follow the Scriptural form for one? Why do they make a kind of sideboard or dresser of it, by setting it against a wall, a thing that was never heard of in the entire world before, for everywhere altars are so placed as to be compassed about. David said, "So will I compass Your altar, O Lord"; Elijah dug a trench *about* the altar; the altar of the Old Testament could be *surrounded,* but from where came these new-fashioned erections which are not even according to the fashion of Judaism? From what heathenism did they borrow their *steps* to the altar, such things being forbidden of the Lord? Where did they contrive their "high altar"? What means those ornaments on an altar? Strange intrusions, these, for an altar; surely they must have taken their models from those altars of Baal, of which we read that there were images on high above them—for how commonly do we see either their pieces of plate with superstitious symbols, or their sumptuous common prayer books, adorned with silver crucifixes; and what is worse, pictures and images, and candles, and I know not what of trumpery besides? Let us never, therefore, use the term *altar* as synonymous with the communion table lest we countenance deadly error! Of all delusions that have ever happened to the human race, surely that of *transubstantiation* has been at once the most absurd and the most profane! Both that doctrine, and all growing out of it should be protested against by every sincere Christian, especially at this dreary time when superstition is daily increasing! If ever we shall have Popery back in this land, it will owe much of its advance to the misuse of *terms;* call not a table an altar lest you come to bow before it as the Popish heathens do! Use it as a table of fellowship and communion,

but never dream of it as an altar! The one altar which sanctifies the gift is the person and merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing else!

We now come to the consideration of this subject. I shall first refer you to the passage in the book of Exodus in which the great bronze altar of the tabernacle was described, and try to work out the type as it reveals our Lord; and then, secondly, I shall ask a few practical questions.

I. In the 27th chapter of the Book of Exodus you have the Lord's command: "And you shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad—the altar shall be square—and its height shall be three cubits. You shall make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: its horns shall be of the same: and you shall overlay it with brass." Jesus Christ is the antitype of this bronze altar; all that it signified typically, we have in Him.

And first the altar typifies our Lord, if we consider the *use* of it; the altar had at least two uses, first, to sanctify that which was put upon it, and then, secondly, to sustain it or bear it up while the fire was consuming it. Our Lord Jesus is Himself the sacrifice as well as the altar. Whatever is offered to God by Him or by us is accepted, because of the excellence of His person. As God and perfect man in one person, all that He does, and all that He presents becomes acceptable because of the excellence that dwells in Him. And so, also, He bears and sustains all the violent heat both of the fire of divine wrath, and the fire of divine presence which consumes the sacrifice put upon the altar. How our Lord Jesus Christ lifts up our gifts towards heaven! How of old did He lift up our sins! And when the holy flame descended and consumed Him, as the great victim for human guilt, what strength and power there was in Him, fitting Him like an altar of brass to endure all those furious flames! And now, today, He does sweetly lift up before

God all the offerings of His people, and renders them acceptable in Himself! The old Puritans were apt to say that the altar represented the deity of Christ because the deity of Christ lent power as well as virtue to the manhood of Christ—but may we not consider His entire person to be the sustaining and sanctifying altar of mediation? As the one appointed Mediator for mankind, He puts a value into the gifts of His people, and His own sacrifice derives efficacy from His person and character; in Him we are able to bear the presence of God when He accepts us, for our God is a consuming fire, and we can only meet Him in Jesus! It is only on the bronze altar that the heavenly fire can consume our sacrifice; the wrath which consumes Jesus has endured once and for all that glory of consuming love we are able to learn through our union with the incarnate God.

Let it never be forgotten, then, that if our souls and bodies, which we offer to God, are to be presented before the Lord, it must be by Christ as an altar; and if *we* are to be sanctified and rendered acceptable, it must still be by Christ as an altar! There never could be but this one altar for Israel; for all Israel according to divine appointment, this was the only altar. Every victim must be slaughtered here; every acceptable burnt-offering must be brought here, and so with us; we cannot offer a prayer, much less *ourselves*, except by Him. There is one Christ for all the saints; one Jesus for you who are grown in divine grace; one Jesus for those who are but beginners in spiritual things; one Lord Jesus for the black and filthy sinner when he first seeks for mercy; one Lord Jesus for the Christian made perfect when he enters into his rest! There is but one altar for all Israel and that one altar for all times—for Israel in the days of Moses, for Israel in the days of Solomon, for Israel until the end of the dispensation. You and I come to God by the same road which was traveled by David, and afterwards by the Lord's

apostles; never was a believer accepted except in Jesus, *in any age*. Never was a word done that was acceptable to God in any period except through Jesus Christ; one altar, and only one for all ages for the whole chosen seed. We hold this as a truth of God—let us prize it and defend it!

The place of the altar next deserves your consideration. You will remember that the moment you entered into the door of the tabernacle, you saw this altar of burnt-offering, and before you could reach the veil which separated the holy from the most holy place, you must pass hard by the altar. So at the very beginning of the Christian life, the first thing we have to learn is that we approach God through Jesus Christ! You know nothing of Christianity unless the most prominent thought of your soul is Jesus as the Mediator between you and God. Talk not of Christian example or of Christian holy teaching—these things are but *secondary*—you must know Jesus Christ as suffering and pouring out His soul unto death as a propitiation for sin, or you do not know the inner sense of the divine religion of the cross. Nobody could help seeing that bronze altar. Walking with his eyes open through that court, every observer must see it; there was its perpetual smoke and smell, and this everyone would perceive. While in itself it was so large and important that it could not be overlooked, even so, my hearer, you cannot abide in the religion of Jesus, even for an hour, without beholding Him, and without resting in Him; you know nothing unless you know Him as the altar of God! The way to the most holy place was by this altar. "No man comes to the Father but by Me." We cannot enter into fellowship with God, nor understand the deep things of God, nor penetrate into the divine mysteries or the highest of the doctrines of the truth of God except by first passing where the atonement is offered, and where Jesus stands—the only Mediator between God and man! How many have tried to learn the doctrines

apart from Christ! And how many try to preach them! But they are unedifying, and even lead to mischief; the best of all preaching of doctrines is such as that which we had in Dr. Hawker's day, when he preached *election*, but it was always election in *Christ.* The doctrine of predestination was clearly enough stated, but its sweet relationship to the Lamb of God was always dwelt upon. Let it be our desire, when we enter into the deep things of God, to view them in relation to Jesus, and pass by the altar to reach the veil.

The form of the altar deserves our attention, as it helps to bring out something more of Christ. The altar was square. Where shall we learn to measure the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the love of Christ that passes knowledge? If we may not so measure them just yet, it is satisfactory to know that everything about Christ is well ordered and arranged by infinite wisdom. The altar is not made haphazardly, it is square; there is no excess in Him, there is no lack in Him; all that we need to render our sacrifice acceptable to God we have in Him. Ainsworth says that the form of four-square represents stability and endurance, and truly our Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Other altars have been overturned, but this, never! The saints came to Him thousands of years ago, and there He stood between the porch and the veil; we come to Him today, and He still stands there, when the ages shall have passed by, and things that men have dreamed to be everlasting shall have melted like the morning's hoar frost, there shall still be the same Savior fixed in His place to still offer the prayers and the praises of His people!

At each corner of the altar was *a horn*. The horn is always the emblem of power, and these horns indicated, doubtless, the power which lies in the person of Jesus Christ—the power with God on our behalf. We never need be afraid of acceptance in the Beloved when we see what *might,* what *virtue,* what sacred

merit dwells in Him. God reject His Son?! Impossible! The Adored of angels, the Eternally Beloved must be accepted of God! Having given His hands to the nails, and His heart to the spear; having suffered even unto death, it cannot be that the Lord should deny Him, and disrespect His sacrifice. He must be forever prevalent with the Most High. Put yourself on the altar, Christian—God must accept you, for He accepts the victim because of the altar *which sanctifies the gift!* He must accept you, feeble as you are, for Jesus infuses merit into you as the altar into the gift; Come with your tears, come with your sighs and your groans, poor trembling ones, there is no fear but what you shall be victorious— those four horns indicate how meritorious Jesus is, and He will render you as acceptable as He is Himself!

The altar, too, as we are describing its form, we must remember was built originally so low that it was reached by the priests without the use of steps, and, indeed, steps were expressly forbidden—the reason being given that, in going up to the altar, it would not be possible that the nakedness of the priest should be seen. God would have nothing indecorous in His service. The spiritual meaning being, I suppose, that Jesus Christ, when we go to Him, is most accessible; we are not to climb to Him by steps of creature effort, merit, or preparation. Those preparations for Christ, of which so much is made by certain preachers, are all blasphemous! Divines will tell you, you must *feel* this, and *feel* the other; they say you must pass through this *experience,* and the other; but truly—

"All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him."

And this He *gives* you! There are no steps up to the altar; there are no human preparations for Christ; you may come to

Him just as you are, for He is waiting to be gracious. Solomon's altar in the temple was on a large scale, to show the greatness of our Lord's power, and divine grace, and in order to maintain proportions, it was made much too high to be reached without some mode of ascent—and it is supposed, therefore, that the priests reached it by a gradual incline, since steps must not be made to it. And here we should be taught how, in coming to Christ, we ascent towards God; when we draw near to Him with true hearts, we are elevated; man is never more truly exalted in spirit than when he bows lowest at the foot of the cross. Calvary, though it was no mountain, nor scarcely a hill, outsoars the Hermons and Pisgahs—its top is nearer heaven than Carmel or Bashan—

"Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the cross I gaze."

Let me but tarry there, and if I am not in paradise, I must be at least, in the suburbs of the New Jerusalem! No truth of God is as dear as Jesus crucified—the altar of His atonement is so low that a child may reach it, and yet it is so high that by it we ascend to heaven!

It is notable, and you will kindly look later this afternoon into your Bibles, and investigate the matter, that this altar was increased in size in the temple. It was far smaller in the tabernacle than in the temple— so may our conceptions of Christ be ever growing! If we know Him well enough to find that He is sufficient for our present needs, may we yet understand His all-sufficiency; if we have discovered something of His excellence, and of the admirable way in which He secures our acceptance with God, may we know this more and more; may Jesus grow upon us, until unable to

comprehend Him, we shall rejoice in His exceeding greatness, and be filled with His fullness!

I must not forget, in speaking of the form of the altar that as the observers passed round it they would be constantly struck with its bespattered appearance. Entertain not the notion the tabernacle and the temple must have been very pleasant places; we can scarcely imagine anything that must have been more awe-inspiring, and even revolting to the mind of the observer, than the court of priests when sacrificing was being carried on. It must, on great occasions, have resembled a butcher's shop with the addition of smoke and fire. And this bronze altar was so frequently smeared with blood, and so constantly were there full bowls of warm gore thrown at its base, that it must have presented a very ghastly appearance. This was all to teach the observer what a dreadful thing *sin* is, and how it can only be put away through suffering and death. The Lord did not study attractive aesthetics; He did not prepare a tabernacle that would delight men's tastes. It was rich, indeed, but so blood-stained as to be by no means beautiful; no staining of glass to charm the eye, but instead, the guts of slaughtered bulls! Such sights would disgust the delicate tastes of the vanity of this present age! Blood! Blood on every side! Death, fire, smoke, and ashes mingled with the bellowing of dying beasts—and the active exertions of men whose white garments were all crimson with the blood of victims! How clearly did the worshipers see the sternness and severity of the justice of God against human sin, and the intensity of the agony of the great Son of God who was, in the fullness of time, by His own death to put away all the sins and transgressions of His people! By faith come, my brothers and sisters, and walk round that blood-stained altar, and as you mark its four-square form, and its horns of strength, and see the sacrifices smoking thereon, acceptable to God, look down and mark the blood with which

its foundations are so completely saturated, and understand how all salvation and all acceptance rests on the atonement of the dying Son of God!

We will pass on to observe, next, *the materials* of which the altar was made, for these also were instructive. It was made of acacia wood, overlaid with brass; the acacia wood is always understood to represent the *incorruptible* human character of our Lord Jesus, for this was a wood which would not rot, even as Jesus, when tempted, even in all points like as we are, yet remained without sin. The brass, of course, was necessary as an outer covering, lest the altar should be consumed by the flames; it had to bear perpetually the blazing, and the burning fire, and so we in the brass see the *endurance* of Christ— how His loins were girt about with power, and how the divinity within sustained the perfect man while He bore—

"All that incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough and none to spare."

Look on that brass, Christian, with admiring eyes! Think how oftentimes it was heated by the fire, and then look upon your Lord, and think how in soul and body He was tortured and tormented for your sins, and reflect how strong He must have been to suffer so as to be able to bear the whole of divine wrath and make a complete atonement for the transgressions of His elect!

The fire which burnt upon the altar also deserves to be noticed; it was doubtless no common fire of ordinary culinary use; it fell from heaven, and there may have been qualities about which rendered it different than any other. For instance, it may have left none of that residue of ash, and smoke, and filth that would be found in the use of ordinary fire; it may have been like lightning in its force and pureness. Complaints were

always made of the old heathen temples, of the abundance of flies and filth found there; hence the Jews were accustomed in derision to call the idol god Baal, Beelzebub, or the god of flies, because of the abundance of such noxious creatures found in its temples. Probably there were none such in God's temple, for the Lord's fire slew every unclean thing; this fire had noble and distinct qualities, consuming and blazing after a nobler and purer sort than ordinary flames; and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ has burning upon His altar no impure flames. Love burns there which sprang only from His own bosom; a holy zeal burns there without the slightest admixture of self-love; the Holy Spirit burns there, that purest and best of flames that can rest on mortal men, and there, too, burned the fire of divine wrath, which was a holy jealousy against sin! And when God Himself comes upon that altar to accept His people, it is a divine acceptance unutterably glorious!

But I must not detain you longer. If you will read the passage at home, you will find abundance of matter suggestive of the person and the work of Jesus Christ; to Him must we always come in heart and soul; we know of no holy place now, nor holy days, nor holy implements; our soul serves God in *spirit*, for He is a Spirit, and seeks those to worship Him who do so in spirit and in truth. Our soul gives to Jesus Christ preeminence in all her trusting, coming to God only through Him, and never thinking that she can either serve, or worship, or live aright except as she dwells in Christ, and the merit of Christ commends her to the Father. That is the thought, the one thought I wish to bring forward—and though I cannot speak this morning as I would—yet if that abides with you, this hour shall not have been lost time.

II. Now a question or two. My first inquiry is, *have you and I always taken care to keep to the one spiritual altar?* The sin of this age is idolatry; the whole tendency of this generation is towards

the setting up of other than spiritual altars. The only way to come to God is spiritually through Jesus Christ— but you will find yourself, dear friend, frequently tempted to make something *else* the vehicle of access to God, and to render homage to Him through some other vehicle. You may depend upon it, that the belief that this *building* or that *any* other building is a house of God, a place peculiarly suitable for worship, is idolatry! You are giving to bricks and mortar some little of the honor which is due only to Christ as an altar! If you suppose that there is any more acceptableness to God in a church or a cathedral, than in any public hall or in the open air, you have made a *material building* into an altar—you have gone back to the types, and have missed the Antitype, and so far have robbed Christ of a portion of His glory. If you look upon any material substances as being holy, or, I will add, upon any *postures*—whether kneeling, standing, or sitting—as having in them any kind of holiness, or if, in fact, you get away from the *spiritual* in *any* manner, begin in any sort, or mode, or degree, to attach reverence to the *physical,* and to the *material*—you have so far wandered away from the simplicity of Christ; you have set up an Antichrist; and you have robbed the Lord Jesus. God will never put away the sin of this land until the belief in material consecration is given up! Thus spoke Isaiah of old: "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he makes all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up." We must do away with idols, and learn that there is no more holiness in our parish steeple-houses, called churches, or in our chapels or cathedrals, than in barns and hovels! God abhors our idolatry, and will visit us for it unless we repent and turn from it! We cannot hope, in this England of ours, to see restored to us the purity of the gospel until Protestants cleanse themselves of this antichristian,

Popish belief, and reverence for our postures, and places, and men, and days, and books, and I know not what beside! Worship God, men! Demean not yourselves by paying reverence to anything else! Worship God in Jesus Christ! That is the one and only canon of worship—in the power of the eternal Spirit approach God through the merits of the Redeemer! And as for your so-called priests, and your churches, and your holy things—away with them! They are not to be borne by reason, much less by men of spiritual minds; worship God in Jesus Christ, and give the glory due unto His name wholly to Him—give none of it to things of human devising.

The next question is, *Are there not some among you who have been offering to God without an altar at all?* I mean this—you have been striving, you say, to do your duty; you are an honorable member of the state; you have sought to be religious, too, and you have come up with the assembly of God's people. You never forget the Sabbath, or the offering of your morning and evening prayer; you believe yourself, therefore, to be among the good and the righteous, and you hope to be accepted at the bar of God. Yes, I see your sacrifice, but where is your altar? For be assured, God will not receive your sacrifice without an altar, and for altars there is but one! You have forgotten, my dear friend, the one great essential thing; according to our text, the *altar* sanctifies the gift; *your* gift is not sanctified at all then—it is an unsanctified, unacceptable gift. The whole of your life, though commendable in itself, and to be imitated by others in its outward development, is not accepted of God because you have never placed that life upon the appointed altar of Christ Jesus! You have not offered it to God, having first trusted in Christ, and looked to His merit for its acceptance; you have been depending upon *yourself*, and therefore you are no more likely to be saved than Cain was when he went about to offer a sacrifice of his own, and could not submit to bring the lamb

according to divine appointment. Oh, I could weep over some of you who have so much that is good about you, because you forget the Lord Jesus! Why, you have forgotten the one, the main, the essential thing! Those morning and evening prayers of yours—what are they? If you have not seen Jesus on the cross—if you have not looked to His wounds, you have not prayed at all! That helping of the poor which is so kind of you, yes, but if you have not done it for *His* sake, trusting in *Him*, who, though He was rich, yet for your sake became poor, you have not done it unto God at all! And if you have been working and going about to establish your own righteousness, and have not submitted yourself to the righteousness of Christ, it will all be a failure. You gentlemen who have brought up your families so well; you honest working men who fight the battle of life so valiantly; oh, it is grievous to think that you should labor in vain, and spend your strength for nothing! You bring your bulls, and your rams, and sacrifice to God, and they are all an offense and an abomination because you do not bring them to the one appointed altar! God help you to think of this, and to *repent* of the folly, and from now on live in consistency of character as you have done, but make not *that* your trust—come to Jesus first, and let the rest follow!

Next, my brothers and sisters, another inquiry for those of us who have brought our offerings and ourselves to God through Jesus Christ, let me ask whether we have not often forgotten to attach the importance to the altar which we should have done. I mean this—I pray, and when my prayer is done, I think within myself, will it prevail? And I remember that I did not plead the blood of Jesus as I ought to have done; I said, "for Jesus' sake," but I should be ashamed to pray except in His name; and did I realize that I could not be acceptable with God in *myself*—that it must be because of the Redeemer's perfections, sufferings, bloody sweat, passion, and resurrection

that I would be heard? Now my prayer has lost much power if I have not pleaded Christ's *work*, and Christ's *merit* with all my heart, and soul, and strength! To plead the *merit of Jesus* is the *marrow* of prayer—good words are but the bone. This is the soul of prayer! This it is that takes heaven by storm! This moves the heart of God, the bringing before God the *sacrifice* of His dear Son, the making Gethsemane to ring, again, in the paternal ears, making the cross to shine again before the Father's face, pleading earnestly because Jesus deserves abundantly! Have we not often missed this? And if we have in our prayers, I am sure we have much more in our other engagements. I am afraid we preach without putting the sermon on the bronze altar, and that we distribute our tracts or teach in the Sunday school, or talk of Christ with the sick, and do it without presenting the service through the meritorious person of our Lord. Oh, it is blessed when one has preached, and felt, "Well, I have not succeeded as I could desire; I have felt heavy in my Master's service, shut up so that I could not come forth; but still I meant to honor Him, and now, my God, accept my poor service for my Redeemer's sake." This is the way to put our service right on the altar, and there it is sure to conquer! Oh, then, it is so blessed to know that *Jesus* sanctifies the gift! The gift was nothing—a poor speech for His name, a scanty gift to His poor saints, but still, God receives it as He accepted the bullocks—not for the bullocks' sake, but for the altar's sake! And so will He receive our faulty services for the sake of Jesus when we offer them through Him. Let your souls anchor themselves to the atonement of Jesus; cast more cords about yourself, and bind your spirits fast to Him. You are never healthy, you are never strong, you are never happy, you are never lifted up towards heaven except when you abide close to the person of the Son of God made flesh for you. Never journey away from the cross; seek other truths of God, and delight in other

beauties if you will, but the *first* truth, and the *first* beauty in heaven and earth is the crucified Redeemer—keep to Him, and rejoice in Him.

I shall not detain you longer except to say this. Have we, dear friends, as believers, ever fed at this altar? We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle. That is to say, those who trust in *ceremonies* have no right to Christ! Those who think themselves priests above their fellow Christians *cannot* taste Christ; they are shut out by their own acts and deeds—they have no right there. But we who do not serve the outward tabernacle, we have come to *spiritual* worship, by God's grace, and we have a right to eat at the altar of Christ. Here is a choice morsel for us—God has accepted us in Christ! Feed on that, Christian! You have condemned yourself, but God has accepted you; men have criticized and censured you, but in Christ, God has accepted those imperfect works of yours! Why, it is enough for a courtier if his king smiles—is it not enough for you? No, lie not down, and groan and cry because you have not acted perfectly—but having repented of every omission and transgression, rise up with courage to do better things, because even your *worst* things have been accepted! Feed on Christ who makes you accepted! Feed on the *acceptance* itself, and so like the priest, commune with God at His table!

And if you have already laid yourself upon the altar of Christ as a reasonable sacrifice, come and do it again! It is very desirable to frequently renew our consecration to Jesus. "Yours we are, Son of David, and all that we have"; you who have been bought with His blood, draw near to Him, and yield yourselves anew to Him this morning; you admit that you are His in blessed marriage bonds—come, then, and declare anew—"My Lord, take me wholly! Use me, use me to the last ounce! Use me up! Grant that there may not be a hair of my head, nor a drop of my blood, nor a beating of my pulse which is not Yours!

Lord, I make no reserve; I give You my children, my house, my property, my time, my body, my soul, and I do not ask You to spare me, and give me an easy life; do as You will with me, only glorify Yourself in me! When the bullock was on the altar, the flesh-hook was used to aid in burning it completely— the priest desired that there should be nothing of the offering left. So, Lord, if You use the flesh-hook of affliction to drag me into the fire, so let it be; I would that You should win as much glory out of me as You can extract from a mortal man by suffering, or by service; appoint me what you will, only, Father, glorify Yourself, and enable me to glorify You!" If we shall thus consecrate ourselves, there will be better days in store for us than we have as yet known, and the church and the world will know that God has worked wonders for us! May God give you a blessing, for His name's sake. Amen.

832 THE BEST CLOAK – ISA. 59:17

A Sermon Delivered
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And was clad with zeal as a cloak." — Isaiah 59:17

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Isaiah 59]

THE SOLITARY CHAMPION who is here spoken of, who looked and "saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor"—and therefore His own arm brought salvation unto Him, and His righteousness it sustained Him—this conquering hero we cannot fail to recognize as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Prince of the house of David, our Lord Jesus Christ! Whatever may have been the first and primary meaning of the text, we are persuaded that the ultimate reference of it is to that destroyer of death, the Captain of our salvation, by whose struggles the whole host of the elect have obtained the victory! Of Him we may say beyond and above all others, that He "was clad with zeal as a cloak."

When a man has all other excellences, when the grace of God has worked in him all other virtues, then *zeal* is still needed to elevate and perfect his entire manhood; behold the altar, built of unhewn stones, and after God's own law; behold the wood laid on it; see the victim slain, and the blood flowing, but you cannot make a sacrifice without fire—unless the fire from heaven shall perfect the sacrificial preparations, all will be useless. Behold in the altar the figure of the man; he has faith,

courage, love, consecration, but if he lacks the fire of fervent *zeal*, his life will be a failure; he will remain an offering unconsumed, and consequently worthless, and unaccepted. By this indeed, may you know the genuine from the false when other things might raise a question—the false is like the altar of Baal whereon there is much wood, and a well-fed bullock, and around it are active genuflections and vigorous rituals, but there is no true fire from heaven. While the genuine is like the altar of Elijah, upon which in answer to fervent prayers, the hallowed flames descend! One of the first requisites of an earnest, successful, soul-winning man must be zeal; as well a chariot without its steeds, a sun without its beams, a heaven without its joy, as a man of God without zeal.

Taking the text and coming to it at once with eager expectation, because the Lord is there, we shall first observe *how zeal is to be regarded*—it is to be to the Christian as a *cloak;* secondly, we shall joyfully show *how our Lord Jesus Christ exhibited it;* and then thirdly, look for a few minutes at the secret springs *which fed the zeal of our blessed Lord,* and which in our case must also feed us.

I. First, then, according to the text, **ZEAL IS TO BE REGARDED AS A CLOAK THAT COVERS ALL**.

The Christian is to wear zeal as we wear an outward garment which covers all the rest of our garments—a flowing robe which encompasses the entire person.

Zeal is all enveloping; zeal should envelop all the powers of the Christian. He is to invest himself with faith and love, with patience and perseverance, with hope and joy, but *zeal* must be over all these. We are not to be zealous with one part of ourselves, or zealous in one particular duty, or zealous at one special season. We are to be altogether zealous for all Christ's work, for all Christ's truth, and at all times zealous not only in one good thing, but in *all* good things, wrapping ourselves up

completely in zeal—by the power of God's Spirit, just as the traveler in the snowstorm wraps himself up in his great coat, or binds his cloak about him, zeal is to envelop all.

We are to wear holy zeal as a cloak in order *to preserve the different parts of our soul from danger.* Zeal is preserving; the cloak covers the arms, the breast, the heart, and all the more delicate parts of the body; in order that when the rain comes down we may not so soon be chilled to the skin, and suffer injury from cold, we are protected with a cloak, and find it to be a warm and welcome shelter—so our love needs to put on zeal as a protection against the coldness of the outside world. Our faith needs to buckle on a garment of zeal as a defense that when the storm of troubles comes as a blast against the soul, confidence may not be frostbitten; zeal is to wrap up the whole man so that when he is subject to a furious hail of persecution, or a biting wind of poverty, or a torrent of down-pouring griefs, the pilgrim to the skies may hold on his way, and bid all weathers brave defiance.

Beloved, I am afraid that many of God's children are sickening for lack of wearing this cloak; they never rise to the point of being zealous; they are very *proper*, and with that doubtful virtue they remain content; oh, that dreadful propriety which is the death of all true godliness wherever its frosty scepter sways its wintry dominion over a man! Thousands of our members are locked in the deadly arms of an Arctic propriety; they are proper, very proper! They are always afraid of being fanatical, even more than of being worldly or backsliding; when religious work is being done in earnest, they say it is exciting and irregular, and they therefore avoid it; they have heard of unwise excitement attending some religious meetings, and they at once conceive a great dread of everything like excitement—however holy and useful, and therefore, in order to avoid as much as possible that which is at all unusual,

they take to their tents, and shun the very angels of God lest they should become too enthusiastic by conversing with them! I will not commend them for this, because I am persuaded there is no cloak in which a man can be so well wrapped up against the trials of the world, and the temptations of business, as a cloak of *zeal* that covers him all over. The devil cannot so readily assail a zealous man. There is a point, of course, at which he can overthrow him by turning that zeal into unhallowed passion, fierce bigotry, or unbridled rant, but still, in the ordinary temptations of life, the man who is thoroughly and heartily possessed by the spirit of true and thoroughly Christian zeal throws off the blows of the enemy as the shields of the ancient warrior hurled off the fiery darts of the foe!

Zeal is comforting, even as the cloak, when wrapped about the traveler in the snowstorm—and so must zeal be with us. Oftentimes the Christian minister will pass through a pelting, raging, whirling tempest and hurricane of difficulties, and in such times, unless he is very zealous, he may be inclined to succumb, and to yield to the present distress. But He who says, "I am called of God to a work, and I will do it or I will die; I *must* win souls. God has called me to it, and I can lie in prison, or I can have my name cast out as evil, or I can suffer poverty—but I cannot give up ministering to poor souls, and snatching them as brands from the burning." Such a man dreams not of pausing in his career because old Boreas howls! The man who is possessed by an irresistible passion for carrying out his lifework will gird this gracious ardor well around him, and let the snowflakes come as they may, they will only fall, as it were, into a furnace, and will melt before they can injure. You who have zeal for God in your Sunday school classes will find it protects you from the numbing influence that will come over you in the class; after teaching for some months, and perhaps years, the routine of the school is apt to become a heavy toil,

and you are apt to say, "I work hard all week, and I really need my Sundays for rest"; and you will take them for rest unless zeal shall forbid—and wrapping yourselves in holy fervor you will look at your little ones, and feel that you cannot let them perish for lack of knowledge! And out of love to them, and out of love to your Master, you will return to the class with extra devotion; and troubling nothing for the consequences, you will press on like a true hero because your soul is warmed and comforted with zeal as a cloak, and therefore your heart beats warm within, however cold the world may be without.

We may regard zeal as a cloak *by reason of its adorning a man's character.* Many a person looks all the more comely because of the garment in which he has arrayed himself. There is no more becoming garment to the Christian when he possesses all the virtues, than an all-enveloping zeal! Do not tell me that the beauty of holiness consists in a mere stately, dull, and sober round of duties. It is not so! The beauty of holiness consists in that bursting of love towards God which is enamored of holiness, and would rather suffer a thousand ills than do anything evil. Brothers and sisters, you will not be, as Christians, thought beautiful in the eyes of angels and perfect intelligences, (and these are the best judges of beauty), because you coldly pursue the regular rounds of duty; but you will be beautiful to them if you glow, and flame, and blaze with intense affection towards God. God, who is the greatest and highest example of all beauty, when He reveals Himself, does so in a flaming fire—Sinai is altogether on a smoke; He touches the hills, and they melt like wax though they were granite before. God as a Spirit is a consuming fire, and the more we get to be like God, the more shall we become like consuming fires! The half-animated lethargic state in which we sing—

"Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach celestial joys,"

is earthly, gross, sensual; but oh, when we once receive the promised eagle wings, and begin to mount, then are we spiritual! And when our soul, like a sharp sword, cuts through the scabbard, and the body seems as if it could not bear the indomitable energy that rules within—it is *then* that we are elevated to be like God. When God within us manifests the weight of Deity, and bows the weakness of our humanity into the dust while the new-born nature is, in sublime ecstasy, made to stand forth alone, and away from the body in the blaze of the divine presence, *then* it is that we are favored of the Lord! I pray God that we may be evermore ardent as seraphs, made of God to be like those celestial ministers of His who are as flames of fire. The true man of God burns his way; his life is like the passage of a meteor across the sky. None can stay his onrush! He has omnipotence within him; he is launched like a thunderbolt from the eternal hand, and he must go forward till his career is run; he is not like you half-awakened sons of the sluggard, who having no strength from God, and possessing none of your own, crawl as the snail crawls, and melt as it melts until there is nothing left of them! As Watts writes in his couplet—

"They trust their native strength,
And melt away, and droop, and die."

Such as confide in God and in His might, clothing themselves with the holy ardor which God has given them, shall be beautiful in His sight, and beautiful to all eternity in the judgment of those who know how to estimate true beauty of character.

Perhaps these four points may bring out the excellence of being clothed with zeal as a cloak. Zeal is to envelop all our powers; it is to preserve us in danger; it is to comfort us in affliction; it is to adorn us at all times.

But I should like to say one or two other things on this subject. *We must take care to put on zeal us a cloak and not as a hood.* Some put it over their heads, and do not wear it over their bodies. Now, nobody wears his cloak over his head, and yet I have known some persons whose zeal has entirely blindfolded their judgment! They have taken zeal as men put a bandage over their eyes when they would are blinded, and then have gone headlong in evil or foolish work. But the zeal that God would have us cultivate is wise and prudent—it does not heedlessly leap into the ditch, though it would swim a river, yes, and the Atlantic to boot, if it felt that God had bid it do so. Zeal is like fire which is said to be, "a good servant, but a bad master." The fire in the grate; who shall say too much in its favor? But fire in the thatch of the house—who shall say too much *against* it? The fire, the flaming fire of zeal burning and blazing in the soul—this is a Christian gift and virtue! But when zeal takes away *judgment,* and the man is led here and there by the first loud talker; when he is carried about by every wind of doctrine, and is first in love with this, and then with that; then the man does not wear zeal as a cloak, but he makes a hood of it, and makes himself brother to a fool!

Zeal, again, is a cloak, and *therefore is not intended to supersede the other graces.* We do not put on our great coats, and leave off all our other clothes. We do not see the traveler climbing the Alps with nothing upon his body but his cloak—that would be most absurd! And so, zeal cannot take the place of knowledge, or faith, or love, or holiness. It is a cloak which is a great thing, it is true, but it is nothing more than a cloak and the rest of the garments must be carefully attended to. When I have

sometimes heard a zealous brother preaching who evidently did not know anything of this subject, or of human nature, I have been pleased to see the cloak, but I wished that I could have seen some other garments for decency's sake! Ill is the case of those ill-clad zealots who bray with all their might, "Believe, believe, believe," and thump the pulpit, and make great demonstration when they cannot tell what is to be believed, nor expound the doctrine of the atonement—nor give an intelligent description of the plan of salvation! All such zeal is as rational as it would be for us all to go abroad bare of every rag except a cloak. Modesty ought to keep such unclothed men out of sight. Go home, brothers! Go home, you who have only your cloaks, and get other garments, and then we shall be glad enough to see you. Zeal is a cloak, but it is very far from being everything.

Again, zeal is a cloak, *and therefore we are not to regard it as an extraordinary robe to be worn only occasionally on high days and holidays*. A man wears his great coat or his cloak when he needs it; he wears it not on Sundays only, but in going to and fro in his labor; he reckons his cloak not to be a thing in which to walk in state with my lord through the streets, but as a portion of his ordinary working-day clothes, and so ought our zeal to be. Zeal for God should be exhibited in workshops; it should be worn in the market-house, in the senate, or wherever we may labor; zeal should be worn in the homestead, and in the factory, by masters, by servants, by children, by parents. If it is genuine zeal, it will be like the cloak which always hangs ready on the nail in the hall; no, since the storm is always on, and we are always pilgrims, it will be like the cloak which we cannot bear to lay aside; we shall try to wear it for Christ's sake always.

Brothers and sisters, while I say that zeal is not everything, remember that *the cloak covers everything, and do not let your zeal be such a scanty thing, that it will only hang like a belt round your loins;* but let it be a great wrapper in which to enfold all your manhood

apparent everywhere, not secret and inward alone, but revealed and active.

Our Lord is said to put on zeal as a cloak; He manifested and displayed His holy fervor. We have heard some boast that they were zealous, but you could not see it, for their zeal was deep in their hearts. Now our Lord had not zeal merely in His heart, but He had zeal outwardly as well. It is all very well to have divine grace in the heart—that is the first and primary point—but where there is grace in the heart; it soon shows itself in the life. It is useless for a man to say he has an abundance of wealth if he always dresses like a beggar, and his household is conducted on the stingiest system. So a man must not claim to have zeal in his heart if he never shows that zeal in his conversation, or in earnest service of Jesus. Remember, our Lord put on zeal! While the Christian religion is an internal thing, there is no religion in the world which shows itself so much *externally*. There is a remarkable piece of advice given by Paul which sounds very strange if you read it literally; he writes, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, hearts of mercy." Now, surely, hearts are things to be worn within, and not without, and yet he would have the Christian to be such a tender-hearted man as to wear his very soul on his sleeve, so that he can be easily touched, moved, and affected by the woes of his fellow men; so must it be with zeal; it must be in the heart, but it must also shine, and flash, and sparkle throughout the whole of man's outward life.

II. Leaving that point, it is now for a few minutes our very pleasant duty **TO OBSERVE HOW OUR LORD EXHIBITED THIS ZEAL**.

Beloved, we can but speak a few words where volumes would scarcely suffice! *In His earliest childhood, you have tokens of Christ's inward zeal.* He is found in the temple among the doctors, at an age when other children are shouting in the playground,

or laughing among their toys; He is listening to the rabbis, and asking them questions, and when His anxious parents ask Him why He has left them, He replies, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" Yes, even at that early age His soul was longing to commence His work! Eager for the baptism that He was to be baptized with, He was "straitened," even then, "until it was accomplished."

In later life you see His burning zeal in leaving all the comforts of life; what but His zeal brought Him to such a condition that He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay His head"? He might, if He had chosen, have enjoyed the comforts of the domestic circle; there were those who loved Him; there were hundreds throughout Judea who would have been but too glad to house Him; Martha and Mary, and Lazarus were but *types* of others whom Jesus loved, and who loved Jesus; and yet, for love of souls, for love of God, He banishes Himself from all domestic joys. Oh, blessed mirror of quenchless ardor, when shall we learn self-denial from Your example, and imitate Your passion to glorify God?

His very dress showed His zeal, because it was not ostentatious, but in every way suitable for incessant labor, and humble service. He wore nothing that could attract attention. The common smock-frock of the ordinary peasant was His outer dress; nothing in His apparel distinguished Him from others. He had given up all the dainties, yes, and all the comforts of life for the one great object of accomplishing *our* redemption!

He showed His earnestness in persevering *in His worship under all manner of rebuffs;* He was constantly misrepresented; He came unto His own, and His own received him not. Though He was worthy to be beloved of all hearts, yet, "He was despised and rejected of men." Still He never turned aside from His work. Once, when the flesh would have gladly shrunk from

the cup of gall, how mightily did He put aside the temptation with, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"! His path was always onward, and it mattered not who stood in the way—whether Pharisee or Herodian, He tarried for none. Whether the princes of this world or the powers of the infernal lake of fire opposed Him, still onward He advanced to complete His victory.

And as a clearer proof of His zeal, still, *all the blandishments of the world could not attract Him.* The excited crowd would have taken Him by force, and have made Him a king, but such was His zeal for the one work He had in hand, that He counted royal honors to be less than nothing and vanity. There were no temptations to Him in all the pomp of a kingdom. He had received the offer of all earth's thrones from the arch-enemy, and had refused them all; what, then, was one petty princedom to Him! If all Jerusalem had clapped their hands, and said, "God save the King!" He would not have listened to the cry, nor have cared for it; He preferred to wear the crown of thorns, and to give His hands and feet to the nails, and His heart to the spear—and He had no heart, and no hands or feet for anything except the love of God, and the well-being of men. Many and many a man has been very zealous for God till he has met with fierce persecutions, or bitter enemies, and then he has turned his back; and many more have been zealous in the highest degree until wealth came in their way, or the possibilities of honor, and then they have stooped, and have licked the world's feet, and have been mere puddles of fashion. Their ardor for the truth of God has evaporated, and their zeal has fled; Jesus was turned aside neither by frowns nor by smiles, but onward, still, He went, "clad with zeal as with a cloak."

Look, my brothers and sisters, at His incessant labors! In the three years of Christ's life, you behold epitomized 3,000 years of ordinary existence. I do not know how it seems to you, but the

life of Christ appears to me to be the longest life I ever read; it is such a condensed, massive, close-grained life! It is very short—in truth it consists of only three years of labor, as the former part of His life was spent in obscurity, and there we leave it as God has left it. But the three active years of His earthly sojourn, how are they crowded with incidents! Why, He is here, and there, and everywhere! All the day He is working, and all the night He is praying! You read of the cold mountains and the midnight air as witnessing the fervor of His prayer; and then, at morning light He is healing the sick or preaching the gospel, never pausing, but constantly pressing on like a racer to the goal! We meet with incidents like this, "He had not time, no, not so much as to eat bread." And at another time, "They took Him even as He was, into the ship," implying that He could not walk down to the vessel because He was too faint, so they bore Him away even as He was. On board the ship He was so weary, so utterly overcome, that when a storm came on, He slept! Slept while the sea and the sky were mingled, and the ship was likely to go to pieces—slept from sheer weariness and lack of rest! Remember, that all this was not merely work of the *body,* but that which I dare say some of you think very easy, but which, if you were to try it, you would find to be the most laborious work in the world—*brain work.* And in our Lord's case, it was brain-work of the most intense kind, for Jesus never preached a careless sermon, never produced a single address before the people that was uninstructive or shallow, and never delivered a speech in an inefficient manner, coldly and heartlessly. He was a man like we are, albeit He was God—and I am speaking of His *humanity* now—and that human soul of His achieved centuries of work in those three plenteous years. There is, perhaps, no such thing as time to the brain. When we sleep, a dream in which we think we have passed hours may have only occupied a tick of a clock, or the winking of an eye;

when Mohammed in his absurd story, tells you of his traversing the seven heavens, and yet returning to earth again so quickly that the pitcher of water which had been almost overturned by the angel's wing when he started, had not had time for the water to spill, he does in a quaint story but tell you what may happen to the mind. Men who have been rescued from drowning have stated that though they were but a second or two going down in the water, they have yet in that time lived over again the whole of their lives, and their whole history, as in a panorama, has been unfolded before them. There is no *time* to the mind, and when this body shall drop from off us, eternity will be no novelty to the mind—the soul will find itself perfectly at home. Our Lord Jesus Christ realized this fact, for in mental labor He condensed whole centuries of holy thought and desire into those three short years of His service for us! Nothing but zeal could have sustained that toil; nothing but zeal could have upheld that perpetually laboring soul!

Look at the Lord Jesus Christ again, *in His preaching,* and you see His zeal. What words of love He uses! How gently He addresses the poor trembling ones, as He bids them come unto Him, and they shall have rest. He does not utter those blessed invitations in a sleepy manner, but His heart goes out with every syllable, "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And when He turns to sterner oratory, and addresses those enemies of the truth of God, the Scribes and Pharisees, how He thunders at them! Were ever such indignant words uttered as those of the Master, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Why, *there* stood the men! He was not speaking of them as I might speak of people who are in Abyssinia or Japan, but *there* they were, before His eyes, gnashing their teeth at Him, looking indignant, and longing to tear Him down, and drag Him off to death! But, "woe unto you!" came again from His lips, and yet again, "woe

unto you; for a pretense you make long prayers; you strain at a gnat, and you swallow a camel." No man could speak more plainly than Jesus did in the face of these hypocrites—for zeal was girt about Him as a cloak, and no fear of man could restrain Him!

Probably you see His zeal most *of all in His prayers,* for a man's intensity of heart may eminently be judged of by his secret devotion before God. What prayers were those that were heard by the stars, and admired by the astonished angels at midnight as they lingered on the mountainside! What cries and groans; what strong cries and tears were those that shook the gates of heaven as Jesus prayed and pleaded for the sons of men! Mighty Intercessor! It seemed as if this world were not a strong enough base for You to rest the lever of Your prayer upon, when You were lifting up a greater weight than this world, even the weight of our infirmities, which then was heavy upon Your soul! Ah, if you seek a pattern of zeal, you must stand in the garden when the sweat is streaming from Him—not the sweat of man that works for bread, the staff of life, but the sweat of a man toiling for life itself! See there, my brothers and sisters He sweats, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground!

Still His zeal was more manifest even than this, for having prayed and worked so hard, He proved his zeal again by giving up Himself! Having persevered alone when deserted by His friends, He persevered, still, when given over to His enemies! What zeal was that which makes Him stand so silent before the bar of Pilate?! He will not speak though strong is the temptation to defend Himself; He will not speak, for He must fulfill the prophecy, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." It was a wonderful triumph of Christ to hold His tongue; a master speaker feels an intense longing to speak when great

occasions demand his voice, but Jesus was greater than a master speaker, for He was a great master of silence, and by His divine energy He restrained Himself and uttered not a word. Then, when they scourged Him; when they spat upon Him; when they mocked Him—why, a wish of His would have destroyed them all, but He bears their evil in the patience of His zeal for *us;* and when they hound Him through the streets of Jerusalem along the Via Dolorosa; when they take Him out to the mount of doom, and pierce His hands and His feet, and then stand around, and with many jests and jeers mock His griefs; when, as I have said before, His wish could have annihilated all of them, and have put an end to all His bitterness—was it not a matchless zeal which upheld Him in majestic endurance? His zeal was with Him when covered with His dying crimson! It was wrapped about His naked body as a cloak so that the shame He despised, and the cross He endured was bearable by His looking forward to the recompense of reward.

Ah, brothers and sisters, I am not able to speak to you concerning my Master's zeal. It is too great a subject! There it is. Read it as the evangelists tell you the story; seek to enter into fellowship with it, and ask God to help you to imitate it, and then shall you best understand how He "was clad with zeal as a cloak."

Observe what His zeal was made of. It was zeal for God! He went into God's temple, and saw the merchandise that was carried on there, and He did not deliberate, but seizing a scourge of small cords, flogged the buyers and sellers, and drove them all out—as it was written, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." He had not patience to tolerate making a gain of godliness; He had patience with sinners when they bowed before Him, but with those who trafficked in God's own temple He grew indignant, and chased them out!

He had a zeal for God *which was also a zeal for the truth of God!* How indignantly He denounced the adversaries of the true and the good, and how constantly, and with what force did He declare the gospel among the ignorant and perishing thousands!

He had, above all things, a zeal for souls! He loved His church, and gave Himself for it! He saved others, Himself He could not save. No burden was too heavy, no suffering too severe for Him, if He might deliver men from going down into the pit of hell. Such was His zeal! O that all His followers were as their Lord!

III. Lastly, **WHAT WAS IT THAT THE ZEAL OF CHRIST FED UPON? WHAT WERE THE SECRET SPRINGS OF THE SEA WHICH FED THE OCEAN OF HIS ZEAL?**

We answer that *Christ's zeal was based upon a defined principle.* He had of old said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your law is within My heart." Our Lord's was not a hurried, hasty zeal, excited in Him by the earnest addresses of eloquent pleaders; it sprang from fixed and intelligent principles. He had set His heart upon a great purpose; He had weighed it, counted the cost, looked at it on all sides, and now He was not to be turned from it. Beloved hearers, I would that all Christians possessed that intelligent zeal which does not arise from mere excitement of our surroundings, but springs from our knowing what we are, understanding the truth of God, and holding to it, because we are assured of it. Zeal without the truth of God for its fuel is a mere will-o'-the wisp. Jesus knew the soul and its value—the loss of a soul and its *horror*, the heaven of a soul and its glory—and therefore was He zealous. And if such fixed principles reign in you, they will be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. And your zeal will not cease, but continue to flow on forever and ever.

The zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ was *occasioned by intense love*. He loved His Father; He could not, therefore, but do His will. He loved His people; He could not, therefore, do otherwise than seek their good. Oh, how He loved the souls of men! It was a passion with Him! Brothers and sisters, we need to get the same love. We do not love God as we should, or we would be more zealous; we do not love our fellow men as ourselves, or we would be more heartfelt in our Christian work. O that the Christian church would be baptized in zeal! There is much in that promise, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire." Not *drops* of the Holy Spirit, nor sparks of fire—we need to be plunged into it; we need that the fire should cover us as it does the gold when it consumes the dross, so that we may be like the three holy children in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, living amid flames, ourselves aglow, burning our way in our Lord's business! May it be so by the Holy Spirit to the glory of God!

Then the zeal of our Lord Jesus Christ *had an eye to the recompense,* "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame." Christian, think of the recompense of the faithful servant—not of debt, but of divine grace! What joy, when you enter heaven, to be met by those who were converted to God through your means; to hear them hail you as their spiritual father or their spiritual mother; it is a great bliss, doubtless, to enter heaven alone, but it must be a greater joy to hear the wings of others behind you as you enter, and turning round—as soon as you can do so after you have looked upon the blazing throne, and the divine One at the right hand of the Father—turning round, what bliss to see hundreds who were called to glory and immortality through your ministry! Happy shall he be who has turned many to righteousness! He has his Master's word for it that he shall shine as the stars forever and ever. Beloved, seek after this! As men hunt after gold; as greedy

misers search it out, and busy merchants compass sea and land to gain it, so seek after the souls of men! Count all things else but dross, that you may win Christ, and having won Christ for yourselves, bring others to Him! I count that to be life in which I serve Christ, but that is death in which I am unprofitable; I count that day to be a day of true living in which I can tell out something of Jesus, build a single stone in His living temple, or carve a piece of cedar that may help to make the rafters of His house; but that day is nothing else than a mere pretense of life, it is a day of death, as though my body were sheeted and wrapped up in the cerements of the tomb, in which I have done nothing, and thought nothing, and prayed nothing to my Master's honor, and the extension of His kingdom. O brothers and sisters, may God grant us grace more and more to have an eye to the coming reward, and to the, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" so that zeal may be wrapped about us as a cloak!

Last of all, our Lord Jesus Christ was so zealous *because He had a greater spiritual discernment than you and I have.* We are not zealous because we cannot *see;* we can see these houses, these streets, and this money; we can hear those people's tongues, and we can look at these creature comforts. We hear the question, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?" But our ears are as though they were stopped up with wax and our eyes as though they were blinded to better things. We do not hear *true* voices; neither do we see *real* things, nor abiding, everlasting and *eternal* things. Alas, how blind and deaf we are! But when Jesus was here, He saw angels, and He beheld the spirits of men; He beheld not their bodies only, but their inner selves and He looked upon men, not as flesh and blood, but as immortals. Best of all, He saw God! He could say, "I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand I shall not be moved." As Jesus Christ dwelt

in this world, He did not look on it as you and I often do, as though it were all earth, fire, water, wood, stone, trees, men, beasts; but He viewed it as a theater for *spiritual* action. Devils came to tempt Him; angels came to minister to Him. The souls of bad men fought with Him though He fought not with His hands or His staff. The spirits of good men sought Him, hung upon Him, and depended upon Him. As for Himself, His conversation was always heavenly; He was on the earth, and doing good on earth, but still His soul, His great, grand Spirit was always talking with His God. When He speaks aloud in prayer, He says to His Father, "I know that You hear Me always, but because of them that stood by, I did it." He had no need to use vocal sounds with God; His spirit was so near to God that He was always communing with God, breathing Himself into God. What a source of zeal this must have been! He was brought nearer to God than we are, being, indeed, Himself God! And speaking, now, of His manhood—as a man He abode very near to the Father; yet we, too, have a wondrous nearness, for the Holy Spirit dwells in us! In these bodies, as in a temple, God dwells if we are believers, so that there is a marvelously intimate union between God and us! And if we can, by His grace, rise to a higher spiritual life, a life cognizant of spiritual things, familiar with spiritual personages, and dealing with spiritual realities, we shall attain unto somewhat of that mighty, omnipotent zeal which glowed in the bosom of the Redeemer, and in which He was clad as in a cloak.

There are many here who have no faith in Christ, and therefore I cannot exhort them with respect to this zeal. Beloved friends, you have heard what I have been saying about zeal; now, do you know one great reason why I want to have this zeal, myself, and why I desire God's people to obtain it? It is because of you! We believe that when we are zealous, it often happens that we are made the means of the conversion of

others, and we should like to see *you* saved! Do you know the way of salvation? It is just this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." To believe is to *trust*. Here is God's word, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is simply to rely upon Jesus, and when you have done that, you are saved. God will never cast a soul away that leans all its weight on Christ. After you are saved, remember, it is written, "He who believes and is *baptized*." Your baptism must follow your faith—it is to be to you a sign, and a means of fellowship with Christ; you are to regard yourselves as dead to the world, as dead in Christ, and to come, therefore, and be buried with Him in baptism. May the Spirit of God bury you with Christ! May the Spirit of God give you a familiar acquaintance with what it is to be dead, and for your life to be hid with Christ in God! But to TRUST is the first great thing. "He who believes on Him has everlasting life." Baptism follows as an act of *obedience,* and you must not neglect it, but *trust* Christ, and you are saved! God grant you divine grace to trust Him, for Jesus' sake.

833 THE LORD'S NAME AND MEMORIAL – ISA. 55:13

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Sept. 27th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." — Isaiah 55:13

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Isaiah 55]

THESE WORDS are a poetical description of great moral changes which the gospel works wherever it comes; it transforms human nature, and makes society to become as though a desert suddenly blossomed into a cultivated field. At the same time, the words of the text are not solely and alone poetical, for it is a great truth of God that wherever the *spiritual* change comes, the physical change is almost sure to follow; as men are elevated the earth yields her increase more largely; the earth was cursed for man's sake, and in proportion as man forsakes his sloth, his drunkenness, his savageness, the ground rewards his diligence with plenteous harvests. Look at the field of the sluggard, and the garden of the industrious; look over the wild wastes of Africa, and then see the fertility of the same soil when tilled by the missionary's converts. The surest way to benefit men in their *outward* circumstances is to bless them

spiritually—for as they draw near to God in obedience to His will, He will as a rule bless and prosper them. England will always flourish while she honors the word of God; if she departs from the gospel to follow after Popery, she may expect her prosperity to decline. If we desire our land to maintain her eminent position among the nations, we must go on to do everything which is just and right towards all classes; we must break down every old abuse, and build up the good and the true. Doing this, and upholding the word of God, we may expect that this land will inherit a future brighter than the past.

The text certainly touches upon changes in the soil, yet it has mainly to do with the great *moral* world. The gospel transforms the whole state of man, so that instead of the thorn of sin comes up the fir tree of divine grace, and instead of the brier of lust comes up the myrtle tree of holiness.

I. I call your attention to **THE EFFECTIVE AGENCY** here spoken of, and I beg you to refer to your Bibles and read the chapter with me, for it gives a very full and minute description of the gospel.

I do not find in this 55th chapter of Isaiah that the cause of the spiritual miracles of my text is a gospel of forms and ceremonies, of altars and priests, genuflections and processions, images and incense, millinery and mystery; I find not a single word concerning any of these throughout the whole chapter! Nor do I find here a gospel of dogmas and orthodoxies, of rigid creeds and infallible statements of which it is said that he who believes them not, "shall without doubt perish everlastingly." Instead I learn of a gospel of quite another sort, more divine, more glorious by far!

We perceive in the chapter before us a gospel *revealing divine provision for man's necessity, and earnestly inviting man to partake of it.* Look at the first verse—observe its earnest "Ho!" and note the repetition of the entreaty, "Come." The soul has a longing, fitly

described as *thirst*, and for this thirst the Lord provides abundant water, and if man thirsts for a drink more nourishing, here is milk. Or if he requires a draught more comforting and cheering, here is wine, and inasmuch as the *soul* has hunger and needs to receive spiritual food, here is provision whereof the man is bid to buy and eat. The Lord has fully provided for man's needs. The gospel of Jesus says to man, "Man, all that you can possibly need Jesus Christ has prepared for you. Do you need sin forgiven? Behold a fountain filled with blood—wash in it, and you are clean. Do you need sin conquered in you? Behold the Holy Spirit willing to dwell in you, and to subdue inbred sin. Do you desire to grow in grace, and to be made in the image of holiness? Look unto Jesus! Behold the Spirit waiting to work the image of the Son of God in you, changing you from glory to glory as by the presence of the Lord. What are the cravings of your nature? What are the deep woes and longings of your uneasy spirit? "Behold," said Jesus, "only come to Me, and I will give you satisfaction, and that satisfaction shall lead to rest." The gospel does not come to upbraid man, or say to him, "You ought not to have these needs" or, "You ought, by your own efforts, to supply them." No, it says, "Poor, abject, poverty-stricken man, come to Me; God has loaded both My hands with supplies for your great necessities; only come and take what God freely presents to you without money and without price." The gospel, then, which is to turn the thorn into the myrtle, is one which declares that God has made provision for the necessities of man, and which then heartily and earnestly invites man to partake thereof. I cannot understand the gospel of some ministers who never dare to say to a sinner, "Come," and are afraid to bid him repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ! I know why they are so afraid, because they believe that man is not able, of himself, to repent and believe (in which belief I fully agree with them), and

therefore they will not bid men do what is beyond their power. Yet if preaching is the word of God, it should of right be something more than any and every simpleton might accomplish! Now, any fool has faith enough to tell a man to do what he knows he *can* do, but it takes a man full of faith, and sent of God to command men, in God's name, to do things far beyond human reach! When a man dares speak as God would have him, the Holy Spirit puts force into the command, and the hearer is enabled to do what he would not otherwise have attempted. The gospel which cries, "Awake, you who sleep, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life"—this is the power of God unto salvation! We prophesy unto the dead, and cry, "You dry bones, live!" Any man in all Israel could have said to the living bones, "Live," but only an Ezekiel could say, "You dry bones, live!" This is one of the tests of the true servants of God, that they dare to bid men do what of themselves they cannot do; that, speaking in their Master's name, they believe that the power of God, Himself, goes forth with the word of gospel command, and that God's commands are God's enabling to His elect when listening to His truth.

From the same verse it is most clear that *this gospel is as free as the air, for we read over and over again,* "Buy without money and without price," and are not those invited to come who have no money? The meaning of this must is not merely that men *cannot purchase* salvation with gold, but that they *cannot merit* it any way. gospel blessings must be received gratis; the Lord stops not to bargain and quibble with sinners; you are not to dream of *deserving* mercy; you are not to think of making yourself fit for salvation; you are to come to Jesus just as you are. If you have no good feelings, you are to come to Christ to get them; if you have no graces, or virtues, or right emotions, you may come to Jesus for all things. If you are so bad that if you were sifted, there would not be found a grain of goodness in you, yet

nevertheless, he who has no money, let him come, let him come, and freely take what God provides! The gospel of Jesus is as free as the air we breathe; our lungs receive air without let or hindrance, and there is no toll or tax upon it. Divine grace is as free as the water gushing from the rock, whereof every thirsty traveler may partake; free, I say, to every man of woman born who is led by grace to long for it. "Then why do they not take it?" you ask, and the answer is, because their wills are perverse towards Christ, and it needs an act of sovereign grace to make men willing to receive Him. Yet remember if they will not receive the grace of God, the fault lies wholly with themselves; their eternal ruin is of their own procuring!

Further observe that it is a gospel of *hearing, and not of doing*. See the second verse, "Listen carefully". Notice the third verse, "Incline your ear." And yet again, *"Hear* and your soul shall live." Death came to us first through the eyes, but salvation comes through the ears. Our first parent, Eve, *looked* at the fruit; she "saw that it was good," and so she plucked; and so we fell. But no man rises to eternal life by signs and symbols appealing to the *eyes*—it is by the use of the *ears* that the joyful news is communicated! The soldiers of Emanuel would gladly carry Eye-Gate by storm, but it is not to be done; Ear-Gate is a far more accessible point of attack for the gospel warrior; there we must sound the silver trumpet, and there we must keep the battering rams of the gospel continually beating, for faith comes not by *seeing*—it comes by *hearing*, and hearing by the *word of God*. Dear hearer, if you desire eternal life, you have not now to perform a dreary penance, or to pass through tormenting horrors of mind; you do not have to live for years a meritorious life; you have but to *listen* to the gospel with attention and faith; listen to it, and receive it into your soul, and that gospel will do for you what you never can do for yourself—it will change your nature! And when your nature is

changed, then good works will follow as a result, but if you seek good works as a *cause* of salvation, you will make a gross mistake; but if you will take the gospel to be in you the cause and root of holiness, then all manner of good things shall spring up to your comfort, and to God's praise. The first business of a sinner is to hear the gospel. Note how it is, over and over again, "Listen." "Incline your ear." "Hear, and your soul shall live." I charge you, frequent a gospel ministry; I beseech you, search the Scriptures; be diligent in seeking to know what the gospel is, for while you are waiting at the posts of Jesus' doors, you shall hear the good word which says, "Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you." Down with those gospels of gazing and staring; they will damn men, but they cannot save them! The gaudy idolatries which every day are flaunted in our faces, are enough to make the martyrs start from their graves to curse their cowardly sons who tolerate such worse than fooleries. The land must surely groan at its heart to see that here again, on English soil, the pollution of crucifixes, and cross-bearings, and altars, and bald monks, and I know not what besides, multiplied in every corner! The gospel says, "Look to Jesus, and live." It does not say, "Look to crucifixes." Its message is, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me." Not, "Turn your *faces,* and gaze upon a priest acting like a fool in a pantomime." The gospel heard by the heart, and believed in by the soul is the great transforming agency of which Isaiah speaks.

Furthermore, running your eyes down the chapter you will notice that the great means God makes use of for turning deserts into gardens, is the gospel founded on a covenant, a covenant made with David's Lord and Son. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." We were all lost through a covenant; God made a covenant with Adam, a covenant of *works*. It was on this wise—"This do, and you shall live; abstain from eating of the forbidden tree,

and you, and those whom you represent, shall live in My favor." Adam broke the condition of the agreement, and then and there, you and I, and all of us fell down and perished by the fatal act of our first parent. The Lord has now arranged a new covenant of a different character. It is made with Christ Jesus, the Second Adam, and with all whom He represents. It is on this wise—"You, Jesus, You shall keep the law, and You shall also suffer a penalty for all the breaches of My law by all who are in You; if You do this, all those who are in You shall live eternally." At this hour this covenant can never fail us, because our Lord Jesus has fully and completely obeyed the law, and has suffered the penalty due for our guilt. The conditions of the covenant of grace have been fulfilled, and the covenant of grace is henceforth unconditional! It consists only of promises on God's part to us, and not of legal obligations on our part to God; for Jesus Christ has fulfilled the obligations of His people towards God as far as the law of works is concerned. The everlasting and sure covenant stands on this wise: "I will bless you; I will save you; I will be your God, and you shall be My people." Now, if there had been an "if" in the covenant, turning upon something to be done by *us*, it could not have been called, as it is in the chapter, "an everlasting covenant," for it would have been quite sure to break down sooner or later. But Jesus the Lord, having kept to the utmost jot and tittle His part of the covenant of grace, and fulfilled the conditions, the eternal Father is now engaged to fulfill His portion of the covenant towards Jesus Christ and all who are represented in Him. This is the rock on which rests the blessed gospel! Wherever a covenant gospel is preached, it will work wonders, but it must always be a gospel based upon the covenant of grace, even the sure mercies of David.

Still proceeding in our investigation of the chapter, notice that Isaiah describes a gospel whose success is guaranteed. See

the fifth verse, "You shall call a nation that you know not." But we may call often, and men will not come; in this case, however, they *shall* come. "Nations that knew not you, shall run unto you." And again, in the 10th and 11th verses, "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." The gospel of Jesus Christ is an agency adapted to produce the results which God designed; and with the accompanying Spirit of divine grace, the ordained results are always produced. It is no chance involved as to whether the preaching of the word this morning shall be useful or not; God has determined and settled its results from before the foundations of the world! What a consolation this ought to be to all of you who are serving your Lord Jesus; as far as *you* are concerned, everything depends upon your earnestness and fidelity; but as far as *God* is concerned, He has decreed and determined all results, and you may go in confidence that God shall not be disappointed, and the eternal purpose shall not be frustrated. Brothers and sisters, come what may, the gospel shall ultimately be triumphant! Even in our own land the gospel will yet, like a blast from the Lord, sweep cardinals, and priests, and monks, and all the Popish crew down Albion's white cliffs, and sink them in the sea! The day shall come when the ranks of superstition shall be broken like thin clouds before a Biscay gale; the gods of the heathens, shaking even now, shall fall from their pedestals! Celestial light shall scatter the infernal darkness once and for all; only be of good heart, you soldiers of the cross; the voice of Christ shall call the nations, and rising up from their bondage, the nations shall come to Him! The eternal Father shall send

His quickening power into the hearts of myriads of men, and as though it were but one man, they shall throw their idols to the moles and to the bats, and shall turn to the Lord and live! In this is our comfort! Let this be the encouragement of every fainting laborer.

Only one other remark. The gospel which Isaiah speaks of is one which is *very full of gracious encouragement;* were there ever more inviting words written than these: "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"? Those 8th and 9th verses—what drops of honey they are! How they must delight the trembling sinner; yes, and when we preach Christ, we are to preach Him in this spirit. Jesus did declare the judgment of God, and warn men of hell—nobody ever spoke more solemnly than He concerning the world to come and all its woes, but still, it was all in gentleness, tenderness, and pity. Men are saved not so much by threatening them, and making them to tremble with physical fear, as by gently wooing them with Jesus' mighty love, and reminding them of the great Father's pity, and the Holy Spirit's condescension. How tenderly the Lord deals with unbelieving, faint-hearted sinners; He puts language into the Bible which is so loving as almost to make fear impossible! The Holy Spirit searches for metaphors and illustrations, if I may so say, that shall by some means calm the perturbed spirit of poor tremblers. "Look," He says, "your thoughts are very dark and despairing, and you conclude that you must be lost; but My thoughts are not as your thoughts; you know not how kind a God I am; you have no idea how ready I am to forgive the past, how willing to restore My rebel child to all that he has lost through offending Me." You slander the great Father who is in

heaven; you dream of Him as a tyrant; you fancy that He bears always the sword in His hand, but know that like the father in the parable, He sees returning prodigals a great way off, and when they come towards Him, He runs to meet them! His heart yearns for them, and His tongue is ready to speak words of peace. Let us, dear brothers, whether we preach in pulpits, or preach in parlors, or preach in kitchens (and I hope we preach somewhere if we know the gospel experimentally), let us always talk encouragingly to those we meet! "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord"—what says the apostle?—"We persuade men." That is a much unexpected word, "persuade." You expected the passage to be, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we thunder at men, we threaten men." It is not so, but, "We *persuade* men." With all those terrors heavily pressing our minds, we still adopt the soft, tender, and gentle method—we tell men of the great *mercy* of God, of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus, of the power there is in the atoning sacrifice to take away human guilt, of the readiness with which a sinner at hell's gate may yet be lifted up to heaven! It is the gospel of encouragement which, after all, wins the day.

We have spent enough time in noticing the efficient agency which produces the results spoken of in the text, and must now pass on to another point.

II. Secondly, observe **THE BENEFICIAL RESULTS OF THE GOSPEL**.

The change depicted in this verse is very radical. A little observation will convince you that it is a change in the soil. The verse does not say, "Instead of the thorn God shall *plant* the fir tree," no, but as the thorn coming up naturally by itself indicates such-and-such a condition of soil, so fir trees shall spring up by themselves spontaneously—indicating an altogether radical change in the earth beneath. Instead of the thorn, the fir tree shall come up, shall spring up *naturally*. The

results and outgrowth of the soil are different, but it is clear from the use of the words, "shall come up," that the soil itself is different, too. I passed by a piece of common land yesterday; they had been enclosing it, as those rascals always will if they can, to rob the poor of their rights, and filch every morsel of green grass upon which we may freely put our feet. But I noticed that they had only *enclosed* it; they had not dug it up, nor plowed it, nor planted it; and though they had cut down the gorse, they were coming up again—of course they would, for they are a common bush, and a bit of fence or a rail could not alter them; and before long the enclosure would be as wild as the heath outside. It is not so in the text. When God encloses a heart that has laid common, does He cut down the thorns and the briers, and then plant fir trees? No. No! He so changes the *soil* that from the *ground itself*—from its own vitality there spontaneously starts up the fir tree, and the myrtle; this is a most wonderful result! You take a man and leave him at heart the same godless man; you mend his habits; you *make* him go to church, or to the meeting house; you clothe him; you break his wine bottles; you rinse his mouth out so that he does not talk so filthily, and after all that, you say, "He is now a respectable man." Ah, but if these respectabilities and appearances are only skin deep *outwardly,* you have done nothing! At least what you have done is no great wonder—there is nothing in it to be proud of. But suppose this man can be so changed that just as freely as he was apt to curse, he now delights to pray? And suppose that just as heartily as he hated religion, he now finds pleasure in it? And just as earnestly as he sinned, he now delights to be obedient to the Lord? Ah, then this is a wonder! It is a miracle which man cannot accomplish! It is a marvel which only the grace of God can work, and which gives to God His highest glory!

Note the poetic metaphor which describes the outward change. Originally the *natural* heart yields *thorns. A thorn is the conspicuous emblem of the curse.* Upon many ungodly men there is very *evidently* the curse, while upon *all* it really rests; they toil hard, but are yet impoverished. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. Drunkenness, gambling, and uncleanness always carry a curse with them; you cannot enter some men's houses without seeing on the dirty walls and the bare floor the mark of the curse; listen to them, hear them talk, and their speech betrays them; they can hardly get through a sentence without some word which indicates the curse of sin. Or, sojourn among another class of society, and you soon find the mark of the curse either in the shape of discontent, or weariness of religious exercises, or fear of death, or hatred of the gospel, or some other form. But when divine grace displays its marvelous transformation, how different is the scene! Instead of the thorn, there comes up the fir tree, a tree chosen to be used in the building of the house of God where beams of cedar and fir were abundantly to be seen! The man blesses, and magnifies now, the Most High God, and though he feels (and mourns as he feels it) some of the effects of the curse in his own corrupt nature, yet the longings of his soul are in the opposite direction, and the bent and bias of his spirit are towards the hearty and loving service of the Most High.

Observe again, the man originally brought forth a thorn—that is, *a fruitless thing;* look at it, and see how barren it is. God gets neither prayer nor praise from the ungodly man, throughout his whole life the God who made him is forgotten; he never seeks to glorify his Maker; he perhaps looks upon that as cant. His great god is his money, and if he can increase his wealth he is satisfied. O, good God, from this unconverted man You get nothing; he is a thorn, and bears no fruit! Now, as soon as he is changed by the grace of God through the hearing of

the gospel, he becomes like a fir tree! The tree here described is one of the most useful growing in the East, and so the converted man becomes useful to his God, useful to his fellow man, useful to the church, useful for spiritual things, useful to eternity!

A thorn, too, is a *repulsive* thing; there is nothing inviting about it; nobody would choose to make it a pillow or a companion! An unconverted selfish man is frequently most repulsive; I say not so of all, for some people without Christ are persons naturally amiable, but many and many a man, especially when sin has come to a head within him, is a thorn-hedge, a churl, an unsympathizing selfish being. Sinners are as bad a company for true saints as thorns and briers would be for a naked man. "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men," says the Psalmist, as if he felt their company to be too irksome to be borne. But when changed, sinners become beautiful and attractive like those stately firs which delight our eyes! Happy is that man who, though he was once like a thorn, pushing aside all Christian communion, and standing in solitary rebellion by himself, has now become one of those who fear the Lord, and speaks often one to another, even as the pine trees of the forest speak often to one another in their sacred solitude when the wind sounds through their pillared shade.

Again, the thorn is a *ripping* thing—offending and noxious. Pass over it with naked feet, and what a laceration you receive! See how your garment is torn, and the beauty marred by the thorn! So has it been with ungodly men, when unrestrained by divine grace; like Saul of Tarsus, they breathe out vengeance against God and His people. Persecutors are rending and tearing thorns, but when saved of God, they are not the same men. That which they once pulled down, they now seek to

build up, and they are now as earnest to extend the kingdom of Christ as once they were to blaspheme His name.

As for the metaphor of the brier used in the text, it was always the emblem of *desolation*; the brier came up on the desolate walls of Babylon and Nineveh; the brier covered the land of Israel when the inhabitants were carried away captive. In how many human hearts where the gospel has not come is there desolation, sadness, despair? They want they know not what; their cries are like the cries of the dragon, and the owl amidst the broken palaces of kings—the heart is deserted of its God, and therefore deserted of all happiness.

The brier, too, is a thing that *cumbers* the ground. It occupies the place of the palm or of the fig, and so ungodly men cumber the ground; they do no good; they occupy spheres in which others might have served God. They are altogether wasters; they rob God; they bring Him no revenue of glory.

The brier is soon *to be cut down,* and when cut down no use can be made of it; it is burnt, it is put away. Such is the future history of the unconverted man; his sin will bring him sorrow, and the halls of his soul shall be desolate. His life is a cumbering of the ground, and his end shall be to be utterly destroyed among the refuse things which God casts away. Blessed is such a one when God transforms him into the comely myrtle, nurtured, and tended, and cared for by the Lord—and made to celebrate the victory of all-conquering divine grace! All this the gospel does! It enters a man's heart, and finds him like a wild heath overgrown with thorns; it plows him through and through, and cross-plows him; sin is made a bitter thing to him. In the sight of the cross of Christ he is made to detest himself, that he should have treated divine love with such infamous and insolent ingratitude. And then, after the plowing comes the sowing! Living truth is cast into the furrow! Up it springs—first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, and

God is glorified where once Satan ruled and mischief alone was worked! There are many such cases of glorious transformation in this house this morning. It is our comfort to know that if we needed proofs of our ministry, or seals to the power of the gospel, here they are. Oh, how clearly can some of us testify what divine grace has done for our souls! Blessed be the name of our God, it was not priestcraft that saved us, but we heard the good news that Christ came into the world to save *sinners,* and it exactly suited our case! We came to Jesus just as we were, and we cast ourselves on Him, and now, being saved, our great concern is to show forth His praise who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

III. Our last exercise is to notice **THE GLORIOUS ISSUE**. "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Jehovah might if He willed, have taken other names; He might have selected other works of His hands to be the ensigns of His glory, but He has chosen the results of the gospel to be His proudest honors! He has, if I may use such a term, staked His eternal majesty upon the effects of gospel of grace! With the heathen, *their* gods took names from what were thought to be their most glorious works. We read of Jove, the thunderer, because they imagined that he launched the bolt from his hand. They spoke of the far-darting Apollo, the rays of light flashing from the sun. They talked of the cruel Juno in the wars of Troy; each god and goddess was allotted some particular name as indicating its individuality. If Jehovah, the one and only true God, had chosen, He might have been "Jehovah, the Thunderer." We might have read of the far-darting God; we might have had Him constantly portrayed in Scripture as the terrible and avenging Lord, but He has not chosen such a name. He has not been pleased to select anything that is terrible as His peculiar glory, but that which is full of melting *mercy* and

tender *pity!* The gospel of mercy to guilty sinners, the gospel of abounding mercy for abounding sin shall be His name; the gospel of hearing and living; the gospel of inclining the ear and being saved! Now, observe that the Lord was by no means necessitated to choose this to be His distinguishing sign, escutcheon, and glory. See what His arm has done in days gone by—where He made the heavens and the earth, and stretched out the firmament, and filled the channels of the great deep; might not He have said, "These shall be unto Me for a name" when He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast? Or if the things of earth were too insignificant, lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created all *these* things! Those ponderous orbs which move in majesty—has not He made them all? If He had willed it, as He made those stars whose distance and magnitude are utterly inconceivable by us, might not He have said, "These shall be unto the Lord for a name"? We are told by astronomers, and we do not doubt it, that the whole of the fixed stars visible by the telescope may be possibly nothing more than a little group somewhere in an obscure corner of the universe occupying a space perfectly inconceivable for immensity! They may yet be as the small dust of the balance compared with the whole of God's works. If it is so, and God has made worlds without number filled with countless inhabitants, all of which sound forth His praise, He might have said, "This creation which I have finished shall be to Me for a name." But it is not so; the Lord has not chosen *Creation* to be His distinguishing glory! Beloved, there is the world of providence, and in that providence there are wheels within wheels evolving marvels of manifold wisdom; surely these might have been to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign, but it is not so declared. Those mighty acts which we read of in sacred story—surely these might have been unto God for a name! When He laid bare His arm, and crushed

the pride of Pharaoh, do you Hear Miriam's timbrel? Can you not, even now, catch the exulting strains of Israel's song, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He cast into the sea"? Surely, this might be to Jehovah for a name, but it is not so recorded! The leading of His people through the wilderness, when He fed them with manna dropping like dew from heaven; or the destruction of the inhabitants of Palestine, when He made the heathen kings to flee before the Israelites; or the overthrow of Sennacherib; or those 10,000 mighty wonders worked by Him, whose mercy endures forever—surely these might have been called His name, but it is not so!

Turn your thoughts, for a moment, from that which we have seen with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and think of another world. There is a land of spirits, where weeping rules the day. No, let me amend my speech—where lamentation rules the night, unbroken by glimpse of light! There lay the enemies of God, defeated and bound in chains; deep in the awful dungeons lie the princes and kings who said of the royal Son, "Let us break His bands asunder." Behold the boasters! They are abject slaves in the lowest hell! There lie the cruel persecutors of the church—wicked popes, proud cardinals, lascivious monks, and lying priests—what a heap of fuel for the fire! There, too, are the nations that forgot God, and the myriads who hated and despised Him. See how Jehovah has conquered! See how all His enemies are overthrown! See how His foot falls heavily upon them all, crushing them eternally! How terribly He tears them in pieces, and there is none to deliver! An Alexander or a Napoleon might carve their names in conquest, and write up their glory in crimson lines of blood; and shall not the awful Jehovah who will by no means spare the guilty; shall He not make this to Himself to be a name? Not so, says the text, not so! MERCY is His name! PARDON is

His glory! FORGIVENESS of men is His everlasting sign! Brothers and sisters, observe that there is nothing material which God takes to be His glory, because although He made materialism, it is far beneath Him, and not to be gloried in. God is a *Spirit*, and His highest glory must always come from the *spiritual* world. To find Rome built of brick, and leave it built of marble is a fit triumph for mortal man—but there is nothing in the loftiest material work worthy of an immortal spirit! What is the difference between stone and marble, after all? Both shall pass away, and when the desolating wave rolls up, marble and brick shall alike be overthrown by its shock. God has made fairer things than these, and worked mightier miracles than all the pomp of kings can imagine, or the skill of art can execute! And He delights not in material things; His name rises from a *spiritual* conquest— the gospel reigning in men's hearts! Observe further, that out of spiritual things God has selected as His special fame a very peculiar case. He has not made unfallen spirits to be to Him for a name; there are probably many orders of beings who were never tempted; they are unconscious of anything like evil; they are always holy, they cannot be otherwise than pure. And while these spotless beings honor and glorify God, He has not selected *them* to be to Him for a name; pure, untried, untempted virtue is fair, but there is something yet nobler! There are angels that have been tempted but did *not* fall—these are the elect angels, who when Satan fell, preserved their integrity—faithful among the faithless. They did well not to sin; they did better than Adam, who did sin, and yet these ever-faithful servants are not called a name unto God or an everlasting sign!

But see, He has selected creatures who know good and evil, and know them both by experience, and he has selected these fallen and defiled beings! He has entered into the arena of their hearts, and in them He has fought foot to foot the battle of

love against moral evil! And His love has conquered! And therefore to have won that creature once so enslaved to evil; to have overcome sin by the power of His love; to have brought His creature back by His grace to perfection, He reckons a greater honor than even to have upheld an angel or made a world! The Lord has given evil a great opportunity. He has thrown down the gage of battle to it, and said, "Do your worst." He has allowed it to entrench itself in the very *nature* of man; He has allowed man to be a prey to the machinations of Satan, and a slave to his own lusts, and yet He has delivered him, and brought him to His feet! The Lord has ceded to the hosts of evil for ages, all the wisdom of the world—its riches, its pomp, and greatness; and He has put down in the world a humble man—despised, rejected and nailed to the cross. And He has sent out, as followers of that man, feeble men with no weapons but their tongues and their hearts, and no power except the force of the truth of God, and the aid of the Holy Spirit. And yet the Lord has overthrown Satan, utterly worsted and destroyed him! And the archangel of truth has put His foot upon his neck. Moral evil has been defeated by the love of God! In the hearts of tens of thousands of men who believe in Jesus, evil has had the fullest sway, but it has been dethroned; it has been cast from its royalty; its hands have been bound; it has been lashed to the chariot wheels of Christ, and He has led its captivity captive. Now, THIS is what is, "unto God for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

The Lord has acted wisely, as He always does, in selecting such a matter as this to be His name—to be a display of Himself, because it is *everlasting*. God might have made materialism everlasting if He had chosen to do so, but He has not done it. It follows then, if this world had been God's name, since it will be destroyed and burnt up, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Lord would have been dishonored.

If the sun, moon, and stars had been the grandest illustrations of Deity—since they all shall pass away, where then, were the glory of God? The sun shall grow dim with age, and the whole universe shall shrivel up like a scroll that is burnt in the flame, but God has selected *immortal men who cannot die!* And in these He has worked a work which they never can forget; a work which has plunged them under solemn obligations to Him which they never can discharge. He has bound them to Himself by grateful ties of affection which nothing can dissolve! He has plucked us out of the horrible pit of hell and put us into such a place that throughout eternity it shall be our delight, our very *life*, to praise and magnify His name! Oh, how will we tell angels what He has done! How will we show forth in every street to the sacred inhabitants, what divine grace has done for us, and how the love of God accomplished a mighty triumph over our sins? We will tell the cherubim and seraphim what God has done, and make them think they never saw God before till they beheld Him working in *men!* Long down the ages, when the morning star is laid asleep, we will tell our fellow immortals of Golgotha, of Calvary, of Jesus, and His love! We will repeat the story of the cross! We will publish abroad the story of the God who loved and died and of the triumph of the pierced and Crucified One when He entered the doors of our hearts, and captured us by the force of His love! This then, will be an everlasting sign unto the Lord our God!

Let this encourage Christians. If it is God's glory to save man, expect to have them saved, and go to work to save them! Get to your knees this afternoon, with great courage and confidence; go out with tracts, my good brothers and sisters, expecting God to bless you! Preach in the streets, young men; engage in all sorts of holy work, my brothers and sisters, for your labor is not in vain in the Lord! A man always likes to do

what will honor himself; God also delights in that which will glorify Him—expect Him then, to save sinners!

To you who are unconverted, this last word. How this ought to encourage you to come to God in Christ Jesus! Is it to His glory to save you? Oh, then He will do it! There is nothing in *you* that could be a motive for grace—you do not deserve His pity. But then the greater your present sin is, the more the mercy of God will be seen in pardoning you! Come, then with your sin! If you are the biggest sinner who ever lived, then God's mercy will be better seen in you than in any before. So come now, even now! Come to Jesus as you are, and let the infinitude of His mercy cover the vast extent of your sin.

As for you who have been saved, let the text encourage you to tell it to others; do not be backward to profess your faith; if it glorifies God, you owe Him so much that you must not rob Him of His praise, but be bold at once to come forward and tell what God has done to your soul! May His blessing rest upon you, for His love's sake. Amen.

834 THE UNIVERSAL REMEDY – ISA. 53:5

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, October 4th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"With His stripes we are healed." — Isaiah 53:5

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Matthew 26:57-68; 27:27-31]

I RECEIVED, one day this week, a short communication worded on this wise: "Wanted, a cure for a weak and doubting faith, especially when Satan disinclines to pray." Anxiously desirous to prescribe cures for such maladies and for any others which may vex the Lord's people, I began to turn over in my mind what were the sacred remedies for such a case, and I could only remember one, "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Our Lord Jesus is to us a tree of life, and by the leaves I suppose the Holy Spirit means the acts, words, promises, and lesser griefs of Jesus—all of which are for the healing of His people. Then my mind reverted to this kindred text: "With His stripes we are healed." Not merely His bleeding wounds, but even those blue bruises of His flesh help to heal us; not alone the work of the nails and the spear, but the cruel handiwork of the rod and the scourge. Out of all this throng of believers, there are none quite free from *spiritual* diseases; one may be saying, "Mine is a weak faith"; another may confess, "Mine is distracted thoughts"; another may

exclaim, "Mine is coldness of love"; and a fourth may have to lament his powerlessness in prayer. One remedy in natural things will not suffice for all diseases, and the moment that the quack begins to cry up his medicine as healing *all*, you shrewdly surmise that it heals *none*. But in *spiritual* things it is not so—there is a catholicon, a universal remedy provided in the word of God for *all* spiritual sicknesses to which man can be subject to; and that remedy is contained in the few words of my text—*"With His stripes we are healed."*

I. I shall invite you, then, first of all, this morning, to consider **THE MEDICINE ITSELF WHICH IS HERE PRESCRIBED**—the stripes of our Savior. Not stripes laid upon our *own* backs, nor tortures inflicted upon our own minds, but the grief which Jesus has endured for those who trust in Him.

By the term "stripes," no doubt the prophet understood here first, literally, those actual stripes which fell upon our Lord's shoulders when He was beaten by the Jews, and afterwards scourged by the Roman soldiers. But the words intend far more than this. No doubt with his prophetic eye, Isaiah saw the stripes from that unseen scourge held in the Father's hand which fell not upon the flesh of Jesus, but upon His nobler inner nature when His soul was scourged for sin; when eternal justice made deep furrows upon His soul; when the lash fell with awful force again, and again, and again upon the blessed soul of Him who was made a curse for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. I take the term, "stripes," to comprehend all the physical and *spiritual* sufferings of our Lord, with special reference to those chastisements of our peace which preceded, rather than actually caused, His sin-atoning death. It is by these that our souls are healed. "But why?" you ask. Well, first, because our Lord, as a sufferer, was not a private person, but suffered as a *public individual,* and an appointed representative. Your sins in a

certain sense end with yourself, but the sins of Adam could not do so, for Adam stood before God as the representative of the human race; and everything that he did brought its dire effects upon all his descendants. Now, our Savior is the Second Adam, the second federal head and representative of men; and all that He did, and all that He suffered goes to the benefit of all those whom He represented. His holy life is the inheritance of His people, and His suffering death, with all its pangs and griefs, belongs to those whom He represented. They did, in effect, suffer in Him, and offer in Him a vindication to divine justice. Our Lord was appointed of God to stand in the place of His people; a divine decree had gone forth sanctioning His substitution, so that when He stood forward as the representative of guilty men, God accepted Him, having foreordained Him to that very end. So then, beloved, let us never forget that all which Jesus endured came upon Him not at all as a *private* individual, but fell upon Him as the great public representative of those who believe in Him; hence the effects of His griefs are applied to *us*, and with His stripes we are healed. His blood, His passions, and His death make atonement for us, and deliver us from the curse, and His bruises, smarts, and stripes, make up a matchless medicine to allay our sicknesses—

"Behold how every wound of His
A precious balm distils,
Which heals the scars that sin has made,
And cures all mortal ills."

Be it never forgotten, too, that our Lord was not merely man, or else His sufferings could not have availed for the multitude who now are healed by them; He was *God* as well as man, and it is the most mysterious and marvelous of all facts that God should be manifest in the flesh, and seen of angels,

and that in the flesh, the Son of God should most really and certainly *die*, and be buried, and lie for three days in the tomb. The incarnation with its later train of humiliation, is to be believed and accepted as an everlasting memorable display of condescension! From the highest throne of glory, to the cross of deepest woe, the Savior stoops—neither cherubim nor seraphim can measure the mighty distance! Imagination wearies its wing in attempting the tremendous flight! In every stripe that falls upon our Emanuel, you are to consider that it falls not merely upon a man, but upon one who is co-equal, and coeternal with the Father; though the Deity suffered not, yet was it in so intimate a connection with the humanity, that it infused supernatural power into His human frame. Oh, what a rock have we to rest upon—a substitute covered with stripes; a substitute appointed and accepted of God, and that substitute Himself God, over all blessed forever, and therefore able to bear for us what we could never have borne except by lying forever in the lowest pit of hell!

Brothers and sisters, we all believe that our Savior's sufferings heal us of the curse by being presented before God as a substitute for what we owe to His divine law. But *healing* is a work that is carried on *within*, and the text rather leads me to speak of the *effect* of the stripes of Christ upon our characters and natures, than upon the *result* produced in our position before God. We know that the Lord has pardoned and justified us through the precious blood of Jesus, but the question this morning is *how* these griefs and pangs help to *deliver* us from the disease of sin which before reigned within us. It was necessary that I should mention first, the justifying power of Jesus' blood, because apart from our belief in Jesus as a substitute, and as divine, there is no power in His example to heal us of sin. Men have studied that example, and admired it, but have remained as vile as before; they have criticized His beauty, but have not

been enamored of His person; it is only when they have rested in Him as *divine,* that they have afterwards come to feel the potency of those wondrous cords of love which His example always casts around forgiven spirits. They have learned to *love* Jesus, and then their admiration has become a practical thing—but mere admiration, apart from love to Him, and *faith* in Him, is a cold barren moonlight which ripens no fruit of holiness. Beloved, the stripes of Jesus operate upon our character, principally because we see in Him a perfect man suffering for offenses that were not His own. We see in Him a glorious Lord who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor; we behold in Him the paragon of perfect disinterested affection; we see in Him a fidelity never to be excelled, when, through the pangs of death He followed on to work out the purpose of His heart—the salvation of His people. And as we look at Him, and study His character as it is revealed by His griefs, we become moved, and the spiritual evils which had rule over us are dethroned; and through the power of the Spirit the image of Jesus Christ is stamped upon our natures. Jesus dying justifies us! Jesus smitten sanctifies us! His cruel flagellations are our refining! His buffetings are blows at our sins! His bruises mortify our lusts! Thus much then, upon the *medicine* that heals us—it is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ as understood in our intellects, and beloved in our hearts—and especially those incidents of ignominy and cruelty which surrounded that death with deeper gloom, and revealed the patience and love of the substitute.

II. I shall ask you now, for a brief moment to behold **THE MATCHLESS CURES WORKED BY THIS REMARKABLE MEDICINE.**

Look at two pictures. Look at man without the stricken Savior, and then behold man with the Savior, healed by His stripes. I say, look at man originally, and apart from the Savior;

naked, he is driven out of Eden's garden, the inheritor of the curse; within him lies concealed the deadly cancer of sin. If you would see that evil which dwells in each of us from our very birth developing itself upon the surface, you might soon behold it in all its horror near at home. A street or two would conduct you to sin's carnival, but perhaps it were better that you should not gaze upon a scene so polluting in the gambling halls, in the haunts where drunks congregate, where thieves assemble amidst oaths and blasphemies, and lewd language, and lascivious acts—it is there that sin stalks forth as a full-grown monster! In the moral and educated natural man, sin apparently sleeps like a coiled up viper; it is a thing in appearance, little to be dreaded; quiet and powerless as a poor worm. But when man is allowed to have his own way, before long he feels the viper's tooth; the poisoned fang envenoms all his blood, and you see the proof of its deadly poison in overt and abundant sin; men become covered with the visible blotches of iniquity, so that the *spiritual* eye can see in their character the leprosy upon them, and all manner of abominations, worse than the rottenness of the deadliest of fleshly diseases, constantly exuding from their souls. If we could see sin as it appears to the all-discerning eye of the eternal, we should be more shocked at the sight of sin than by any vision of hell—for there is in hell something which purity approves the vindication of righteousness. It is justice triumphant, but in sin itself there is abomination, and only abomination! It is a something out of joint with the whole system of the universe; it is a mist dangerous to all spiritual life—a plague dangerous to everything that breathes. Sin is a monster, a hideous thing, a thing which God will not look upon, and which pure eyes cannot behold but with the utmost detestation.

A flood of tears is the proper medium through which a Christian should look at sin. If you would see what sin can do,

you have but to look into your own heart with an illuminated eye; ah, what mischief lurks there! You hate sin, my brothers and sisters, I know you do, since Christ has visited you with the dayspring from on high; but with all your hatred of sin you must acknowledge that it still lurks within you! You find yourself envious, you who hate envy; you find yourself thinking hard thoughts of God, you who yet love Him, and would lay down your lives for Him; you find yourself provoked to anger on a sudden against the very friend to whose call you would cheerfully yield your all. Yes, we do the thing we would not through the power of sin, and sin degrades and debases us; we cannot look within without being shocked at the meanness to which our mind, in secret, descends. If you anxiously desire to see sin at the full, come here and gaze down the fathomless abyss; listen to those blasphemous curses; if you have the courage, listen to those mingled cries of misery and passion which come up from Tophet, from the abodes of lost spirits! Sin is ripe there; *here* it is green; here we see its darkness as the shades of evening, but *there* it is tenfold night; here it scatters firebrands, but there its quenchless conflagrations flame on forever and ever! Oh, if we have but divine grace to be rid of sin now, the riddance will save us from the wrath to come! Sin, indeed, is hell—hell in embryo, hell in essence, hell kindling, and hell emerging from the shell! Hell is but sin when it has manifested and developed itself to the fullest. Stand at the gates of Tophet, and understand how full the disease for which heaven's remedy is provided in the stripes of the Only-Begotten!

Now, beloved, I said I would show you the cure, and I have but feebly talked of the disease itself, to let you see the greatness of the change by contrast. Observe, beloved, you who have believed in Jesus; observe already what a change the stripes of Christ have made in you! Since the dear hour that brought you

to His feet, what different men and women have you been; indeed, in your case instead of the thorn, the fir tree has come up, and instead of the brier, the myrtle tree has come up. You who were once the blind slaves of Satan are now the rejoicing children of God; the things which you once loved, though God abhorred them, you now also detest right heartily. God's mind and yours are now agreed as to darkness and light; you no longer put the one for the other. How changed you are! You are a new creature alive from the dead; and what has done it? What, indeed, but faith in the crucified and contemplation of His wounds? Yet in you, dear friend, the healing is very far from being perfect! If you would behold *perfect* spiritual health, look yonder to those white-robed hosts who jubilantly stand without fault before the throne of God; search them through and through, and they are undefiled; let even the all-seeing eyes of God rest upon them, and they are without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! How is this? Where washed they these snow-white garments once so much defiled? They answer with joyful music, "We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Ask them from where their victory came over indwelling sin—

"They with united breath
Ascribe their victories to the Lamb;
Their conquests to His death."

They will all tell you that the perfect healing which they have received and which today they enjoy before the throne of God, is the result of the Savior's passion. "With His stripes," say the 10,000s times 10,000s, with a voice that is loud as thunder, and as sweet as harpers harping with their harps—"With His stripes we are healed."

III. I want now for you to note, dear brothers and sisters, in detail, and yet so briefly as not to weary you, **THE MALADIES WHICH THIS WONDROUS MEDICINE REMOVES**. I shall not attempt to read you a full list, for they are more than I can count, but they are never so many there is not one which the stripes of Jesus cannot heal!

I would remind you, first, that the great root of all this mischief, the curse which fell on man through Adam's sin, is already effectually removed. Jesus took it upon Himself, and was made a curse for us, and now there can fall no curse upon any of those for whom Jesus died as a substitute. They are the blessed of the Lord, yes, and they shall be blessed—let hell curse them as it may. The curse has spent its fury; like a thunderstorm which once threatened to sweep all before it, but is now lulled to calm, divine wrath has passed away, and showers of mercy are now following it, making glad the thirsty heart! Brothers and sisters, Christ has already cured us, most effectually, of the curse of God upon us! But I am now to speak of diseases which we have felt and bemoaned, and which still trouble the family of God. One of the first which was healed by the stripes of Christ was the mania of despair. Ah, well do I remember when I thought there was no hope for me! How was it possible, my heart asked, that my sins could be forgiven consistently with the justice of God? That question I propounded to my soul again, and again, and again, but no answer could I find from within; and even when I read the word, I perceived not, though it is most clearly there—the answer to that great question. But, beloved, when I first understood that Jesus Christ stood in the place of all those who believe in Him, and that if I trusted Him, my sins were all forgiven because they had been already punished in the person of my blessed substitute, then I had no longer occasion for despair; then I listened to the word of the gospel, feeling,

"There is hope for me, even for me!" When I understood that there was *nothing* expected from *me* in order for salvation, but that all must come from Jesus—that *I* was not to be wounded, nor to be made to smart, but that *He* had been struck, and had been made to bleed on my behalf. When I understood that my life must be found in His death, and my healing in His wounds, then hope sprang up—bright-eyed hope, and my soul turned unto her Father and her God with loving expectations! Was it not so with you? Beloved, did you ever have a comfortable confidence in God until you had seen the stripes of Jesus? If you are wrapped up in a peace that did not come from Christ's stripes, I implore you get rid of it, for it is a presumption which will surely destroy you! The only sure, solid, everlasting peace that can ever come to a palpitating human bosom heaving painfully under the pressure of sin is that which springs from looking at that blessed Son of God who on the cross poured out His life-blood that we might be saved by Him! For the mania of despair, the stripes of Christ are the true remedy.

Then if we suffer afterwards from any hardness of heart, and there is a complaint of the soul well-known as the *stony heart,* there is no obtaining tenderness except by standing long, yes, remaining *always* at the foot of the cross. When I feel myself insensible to spiritual things, (and I blush to say that it is no unusual feeling); when I would, but cannot pray; when I would, but cannot repent; when, "If anything is felt 'tis only pain to find I cannot feel," I have always found that I cannot flog myself into feeling by the threats of God, nor by the terrors of the law; but when I can come to the cross, just as I did years ago, a poor guilty one, and believe that the Redeemer has put all my sins away, black as I am, and that God neither can, nor will, condemn me, hardened as I feel myself to be—ah, then the sense of blood-bought pardon soon dissolves a heart of stone! I do not believe there is anything that can so effectually

make the ice within us melt, and so speedily thaw the great glaciers of our inner nature as the love of Jesus Christ! Oh, but that will touch you! It will create a soul within the ribs of death! There is a secret spring within the heart upon which the finger of the crucified hand is placed, and the soul arises from its deadly slumbers; Christ has the key of the house of David, and He can open the door so that neither man nor devil can shut it, and out of that opened heart shall proceed godly thoughts, heavenly aspirations, sacred passions, and heaven-born resolves; the best cure for indifference will be found in the stripes of Jesus! See the bloody drops of sweat, O believer, and will you not melt? See Jesus kissed of the traitor, led away with a rabble guard, slandered by deceitful witnesses, tried by cruel adversaries, buffeted by soldiers, defiled with spit—see Him afterwards hounded along the streets of Jerusalem, and then fastened to the transverse beam; behold Him bleeding out His blessed life for love of us who were His enemies, and if this tragedy does not melt you, what will? O God of heaven, if we feel no tenderness in the presence of Your dying Son, of what hell-hardened steel must our souls be made?

At times believers are subject to the paralysis of doubt, and as my friend has said just now in his request for a remedy, that paralysis may be attended, also, with a stiffness of the knees of prayer; and when these two complaints go together, we suffer under a complicated disease for which it is not easy to prescribe. And yet it is easy for the Lord to do so. See here the remedy—"With His stripes we are healed." The blood of Christ is a deadly thing to unbelief; a sight of the crucified strikes unbelief dumb, so that he cannot mutter a single questioning word, while faith begins to sing, and to rejoice as she sees what Jesus did, and how Jesus died! Who could not pray as he sees Jesus' blood upon the mercy seat? Who could not pray when considering the new and living way which Christ has opened

by His blood? A view of the veil of the Savior's body torn by His death will, if anything, induce men to pray! I think I could use arguments which might be blessed to drive men to their knees, such as the danger of a prayerless spirit; such as the enriching influence of the mercy seat; such as the delights of communion with God, and many other things, but after all, if the *cross* does not draw a man to his knees, nothing will. And if a contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus does not compel us to draw very near to God in prayer, surely the chief remedy has failed. There are some saints who have numbness of soul; the stripes of Christ can best quicken them; deadness dies in the presence of His death, and rocks break when the Rock of Ages is seen as split for us—

"Who can think without admiring?
Who can hear and nothing feel?
See the Lord of life expiring,
Yet retain a heart of steel?"

Many are subject to the fever of pride, but a sight of Jesus in His humiliation, contradicted of sinners, will tend to make them humble. Pride drops her plumes when she hears the cry, "Behold the man!" In the society of one so great, enduring so much scorn, there is no room for vanity; some are covered with the leprosy of selfishness, but if anything can forbid a man to lead a selfish life, it is the life of Jesus who saved others, but Himself He could not save. Misers, and gluttons, and self-seekers love not the Savior, for His whole conduct upbraids them; upon some the fit of anger often comes, but what can give gentleness of spirit like the sight of Him who was as a lamb dumb before her shearers, and who opened not His mouth under blasphemy and rebuke? If any of you feel the *fretting consumption of worldliness,* or the cancer of covetousness—for

such rank diseases as these are common in Zion, still the groans and griefs of the Man of Sorrows, the acquaintance of grief, will prove a cure! All evils fly before the Lord Jesus, even as the shadows vanish before the sun. Lash us, Master, to Your cross! No fatal shipwreck shall we fear if fastened there! Bind us with cords to the horns of the altar! No disease can come there—the sacrifice purifies the air! Through hell itself might we go, Savior, all unharmed with its pestilent vapor, if we could but have Your cross before our eyes! It were not possible that all the blasphemy of devils and of the vilest of men, could pollute our spirits for so much as a moment if Your blood were always sprinkled on the tablets of our hearts, and Your deep humiliation always present in our minds. Forgetfulness of the stripes lands us in disease, but the sweet remembrance of the passion, and a blessed absorption in the mystery of the Master's death will surely cast out all evils from us—and keep us from returning to them.

IV. I must now pass on to yet a fourth point. Observe carefully **THE CURATIVE PROPERTIES OF THE MEDICINE OF WHICH WE HAVE BEEN SPEAKING**.

You have heard of some of the diseases in detail as well as the cure on a large scale; now observe the curative properties of the medicine—for all manner of good this divine remedy works in our spiritual constitution. The stripes of Jesus, when well considered, arrest spiritual disorder. The man is brought to view his Lord as suffering for him, and a voice says to his rising lusts, "This far shall you come, but no farther. Here at Calvary shall your proud waves be stayed." My feet had almost gone; my steps had well-near slipped had not my Master's cross stood before me as a most effectual barrier to stay me in my fall. Many a man has gone post haste onward unchecked by any power until a vision of the man, the crucified man, has appeared before his eyes—then he has been brought to a

blessed halt. Read the memorable life of Colonel Gardiner, for what happened to him *literally* has happened to tens of thousands *spiritually*— they have been enlisted to sin, and sold to Satan, but a sight of the Savior slain for sinners has made them pause, and from then on they have no longer dared to offend. Now, it is a great thing for a physician to find a remedy which will hold the disease within bounds so that it reaches not the direst stage of malignity; and this the cross of Christ does! It binds in chains the fury of unhallowed passion. What a miraculous power the griefs of Jesus have upon the believer; though his corruption is still within him, yet it cannot have dominion over him, because he is not under the law, but under grace. It is still a happier fact, that sin shall, before long, be utterly abolished; but to stay it, meanwhile, until it is eradicated is no small thing.

This medicine, in the next place, *quickens all the powers of the spiritual man to resist the disease.* "With His stripes we are healed," because a sight of Jesus Christ quickens our newborn nature! It forbids us to live at the poor, dying rate so natural to our sluggishness; we cannot have Christ before our eyes, and yet go slumbering on to heaven as though spiritual work were but a dream, or mere child's play. He that has really gone into the hall where Christ was scourged, and seen the streams of blood as they poured down His furrowed shoulders, and felt that they were all for *him*, has had his spiritual pulse quickened, and his whole spiritual life stirred! This fire has helped to burn sin out of its nest; this power within the soul has set up a counter-action, and pushed back the advancing powers of iniquity.

The stripes of Jesus Christ also have another curative effect—*they restore to the man that which he lost in strength by sin.* There is a recuperative power in this sacred medicine; He brings my wandering feet back to the ways which I forsook, and the way back is by the cross; He restores my soul, and the

food He gives me to feed upon is His own flesh and blood. After sin has brought us into sickness, and sickness into weakness, there is no restorative under heaven that is equal to living in a constant daily sense of the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ. His sweet love so clearly shown in His torments at Golgotha encourages us; we feel that with such a Savior always caring for us, we have no need to be alarmed.

This medicine also soothes the *agony of conviction*. Anguish of heart vanishes when Jesus is seen as bearing the chastisement of our peace; he who gets to Christ's cross, and trusts in Him feels that sin is still present in him, and mourns over it, but yet he rejoices because he understands that Christ has overcome his enemies, and led them captive at His chariot wheels. "I shall overcome," he says, and the sharpness of the present struggle is not felt. "My sin is forever put away," he says, "for Jesus died, and there is no room for remorse, or terror, or despair." Drink of the spiced wine of atoning love, and remember your misery no more, O you sin-burdened heir of immortality!

But best of all, the stripes of Christ have an *eradicating* power as to sin. They pull it up by the roots; they destroy the beasts in their lair; they put to death the *power* of sin in our members. I know not how near to perfection in this life a believer may be brought, but God forbid that I should set up some low degree of divine grace as being all that a saint can reach this side of the grave! I dare not limit my Master's power as to how far He may subdue sin even in this life in the believer, but I expect never to be *perfect* till I shuffle off this mortal coil; yet the grand result is none the less glorious! Absolute perfection is our heritage; we shall be freed from the least tendency to evil, and there will remain in us no more possibilities of sinning than in the person of our Lord Himself! We shall be as pure as the thrice holy God Himself! As

immaculate as the ever-sinless Savior! And all this will be through our Master's stripes! Sanctification, after all, is by the blood of Christ; the Holy Spirit works it, but the instrumentality is the *blood;* He is the Physician, but the sufferings of Christ are the medicine. Sin is never destroyed except by faith in Jesus; all your meditations upon the evil of sin, and all your shivering at the punishment of it, and all your soul-humbling, and prostrations will never kill sin. It is at the *cross* that God has set up a mighty gallows upon which He hangs sin forever, and puts it to death! It is there at Golgotha, and *only* there, the great execution ground, the Tyburn of our iniquity, is there where Jesus died. Wrestling believer, you must go to your Lord's agonies, and learn to be crucified with Him unto sin, otherwise you shall never know the art of mastering your evil passions, and being sanctified in the spirit. I have thus tried to open up the healing force which dwells in the stripes of Jesus.

V. Now just a moment or two in the fifth place—I am afraid you will think my divisions are very many, and very dry, but still that I cannot help, I want you to review, for a minute, **THE MODES OF THE WORKING OF THIS MEDICINE.**

How does it work? Briefly, its effect upon the mind is this; the sinner, hearing of the death of the incarnate God, is led by the force of the truth of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit to believe in the incarnate God. The cure is already begun; the moment the sinner believes, the axe is laid at the root of the dominion of Satan! He no sooner learns to trust the appointed Savior, than his cure has certainly commenced, and will shortly be carried on to perfection. After *faith* comes *gratitude*. The sinner says, "I trust in the incarnate God to save me; I believe He *has* saved me." Well, what is the natural result? The soul being grateful, thankful—how can it help exclaiming—"Blessed be God for this unspeakable gift!" And, "Blessed be His dear Son who so freely laid down His life for me!" It is not

natural at all; it is something less, even, than humanity, if the sense of such favor did not beget gratitude! The next emotion is love. Has He done all this for *me?* Am I under such obligations? Then I will love His name. The very next thought to love is *obedience*. What shall I do to please my Redeemer? How can I fulfill His commandments, and bring honor to His name? See you not that the sinner is getting healed most rapidly? His disease was that he was altogether out of unison with God, and resisted the divine law, but look at him now, with tears in his eyes he is lamenting that he ever offended! He is groaning and grieving that he could have pierced so dear a friend, and put Him to such sorrows! And he is asking, with love and earnestness, "What can I do to show that I loathe myself for the past, and that I love Jesus for the future?" Now he goes a step farther, and he burns with hatred against the sins which slew the Lord. "Did *my* sins slay Christ? Was it *my* iniquity that nailed Him to the cross? Then I will have vengeance upon my sins—there is not one that I will spare! Though it nestles in my bosom, I will tear it out! And if it shall entrench itself so that I cannot drive it forth except by losing an eye or an arm, it shall come forth, for not one of this accursed crew will I harbor within my spirit!" Now the man's sacred zeal, and burning indignation are issuing a search warrant, and he is going through and through his nature to search for sin, meanwhile crying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Now, beloved, do you not see that all the healthy faculties of the new-born nature are by the griefs of Jesus set strongly at work, and even though sin may still remain within, there is a vitality about the new-born nature which will certainly cast out those baser powers, and by God's grace, make the man meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light?

VI. It is scarcely necessary for me to say anymore except to remark, in the sixth place, that this medicine deserves to be commended to all of you this morning, because of **ITS REMARKABLY EASY APPLICATION.**

I have shown you how it works, and what it cures, and whom it cures. Now, there are some material medicines which would be curative, but they are so difficult in administration, and attended with so much risk in their operation, that they are rarely, if ever, employed. But the medicine prescribed in the text is very simple in itself, and very simply received—so simple is its reception that, if there is a willing mind here to receive it, it may be received by any of you at this very instant, for God's Holy Spirit is present to help you. How, then, does a man get the stripes of Christ to heal him? Why, first he *hears* about them. Now, you have heard often of my Lord's stripes. Next, faith comes by hearing; that is, the hearer *believes* that Jesus is the Son of God, and he trusts in Him to save his soul; then, having believed, the next thing is, whenever the power of his faith begins to relax, he goes to hearing *again*, or else to what is even better, after once having heard to benefit, he resorts to *contemplation*. He resorts to the Lord's Table, that he may be helped by the outward signs; he reads the Bible that the letter of the word may refresh his memory as to its spirit; and he often seeks a season of quiet, such as David had when he sat before the Lord, closing his eyes, and shutting up his heart to all beside the things of heaven. He views Christ groaning in the garden; he pictures Him upon the bloody cross; he sees Him suffering, and so acquires for himself all the benefit which can be drawn from the stripes of the crucified. All you have to do, poor sinner, is simply *trust,* and you are healed! And all you have to do, O backsliding believer, is but to contemplate, and to believe again! Beloved, we must let the old image be stamped fresh upon our soul! We must have the picture cleaned, as it

were—it has been turned with its front to the wall, turn it around, and sit and study it again! Renew your old acquaintance with the sweet lover of your soul; return to the love of your espousal; repair to Calvary! Tarry in Gethsemane, live with Jesus wherever you may be—in retirement, considering, meditating, reflecting upon what He has done for you; this is the simple mode of application.

VII. All I have to say in conclusion is since the medicine is so efficacious, since it is already prepared, and freely presented, I do beseech you **TAKE IT**!

Take it, brothers and sisters, you who have known its power in years gone by! Let not backslidings continue, but come to His stripes again! Take it, you doubters, lest you sink into despair—come to His stripes again! Take it, you who are beginning to be self-confident and proud; you need this to bring you on your faces, again, in prostration before your Lord! And O, you who have never believed in Him; on this morning of clear brightness after the rain, may the Lord give you, also, to come and trust in Him, and you shall live! "Oh," wrote one to me this week, "I have believed that Jesus died for me, but it does not keep me from sinning in anyway whatever! Our minister says that if we believe that Jesus died for us we shall be saved." No, no, but that is *not* the gospel, and such a belief is not faith at all! I do not wonder that a poor creature should have tried such a gospel and found it fail. Do not these men say that Christ died for *everybody,* and then declare that if you believe He died for you, (which He must of necessity have done if He died for everybody), then that will save you? And yet there are scores and hundreds who are proof to the fact that it does *not* save them, because they can believe this universal redemption, and live as they did before!

This is faith, namely to *trust Jesus Christ;* it is the *only* saving faith; you cannot rely on Him and remain unhealed! You

cannot take Jesus for your confidence, and remain just as you were! There is potency about Christ, as applied by faith, which *changes the character,* and makes the sinner a *new man* to the praise and glory of God! May my Lord bless you for His own sake. Amen.

835 A CHEERFUL GIVER IS BELOVED OF GOD – II COR. 9:7

A Sermon
Delivered on Thursday Evening, August 27th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"God loves a cheerful giver." — II Corinthians 9:7

I AM MOST ANXIOUS, dear friends, to make full proof of my ministry and in this one respect especially, that I may address you upon all parts of God's word, and not be found guilty of confining myself to one set of topics, for certainly this, although it might be pleasant, would not be profitable to you. I would rather, if I had my choice, constantly preach upon the doctrine of God's everlasting and unchanging love. I should delight to dilate each Sunday, and indeed, in every sermon, upon the simple doctrine of the justification of the sinner in the sight of God by faith in Jesus Christ. But there are other things in Scripture beside these. All things in Scripture are not placed there for our comfort; all are not promises; all are not words of cheer for feeble minds and disconsolate spirits; there are other words beside those of consolation—words of direction, words of precept; and if we should shun these, if these never entered into the course of our ministry at all, some solemn disease might break out among the church because a part of the "food convenient" for them had been withheld. Therefore I think it is meet to speak to you upon this subject tonight, and all the more so because there is no collection. You

are not asked to give anything, and I shall therefore feel myself the more at liberty to press upon you the instruction of this text; you will see that my simple objective is to bring out the teaching of the word of God to you, not with any ulterior purpose, but purely to promote that result which God Himself may intend to work by the words before us! Words, remember, of undoubted inspiration, and therefore as worthy of all acceptation as any other sentence from the divine mouth.

Brothers and sisters, in the church of God there are various forms of service; there are some to whom the gift is given of edifying others—these are bound with diligence to instruct their hearers, and expound the Scriptures. To others it is given to evangelize—to break up fresh ground, to win the unconverted; these are bound never to stay their hand, but to sow the seed both at morning and evening. Many in the Lord's family are not enabled either to be the teachers of the church, or the winners of souls, but they are called by the duties of a humble, quiet life, to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things; such as these should see to it that their conversation is always such as becomes the gospel of Christ, and befits the household of faith, and it should be their earnest prayer, that what is preached by some may be illustrated by themselves in their daily walk and conversation.

A considerable portion of the church of God is called to yet harder service, namely, that of *suffering*. God still gets glory out of the fire of affliction when His people sing His high praises upon their beds; He receives as much honor from the sickbed as from the pulpit, and those of His servants who are called to lie in a hospital are as acceptable soldiers as those whom He commands to the front of the fray. We must all expect to take our turn in tribulation according to the purpose of God, and when we are commanded to do so, we must take up our cross cheerfully and follow our Lord.

To all the church also, it is given, and to each member in his measure, to serve God by *giving*. Some are enabled, being made stewards of wealth, to give largely of their substance; they are bound to do so, but they should not give it merely as being bound, but feeling it to be their *privilege* to give whatever they can to Him who gave them their all, and who is their All. The poorest Christian is not exempted from this privilege; if he has but little, God accepts according to that which a man has, and not according to that which he has not. And if he is so poor that he cannot even give the two mites which make a farthing, still he may give to God of his *time;* he may give to God of such ability as he has in the teaching of the young, in the distribution of the printed word, or in some other form of service which shall come conveniently within his reach. But none must escape from being givers to God in *some* way, for we are all *receivers,* and so should be all dispensers. Give Him our prayers, give Him our praises, give Him such efforts as we can, but let us all be *givers,* and let us take heed to the text—and be *cheerful* givers, too!

You will notice that the apostle Paul had been speaking about giving all through the Chapter, but he now comes to speak of giving as it appears in the sight of God. And the great argument which he uses, the master-gun, is, "God *loves* a cheerful giver," from which I learn that when we are speaking of Christian service, we ought always to view it in its aspect towards God. He had spoken of what the men at Achaia had thought of benevolence, and of what the members of other churches might think of the Corinthians, since he had before boasted of them, but he recollects himself, and says that the true judgment of a good work is not what may be thought of it by the church, or by the world, but in what esteem *God* may hold it. "God," he says, "loves a cheerful giver." That is the point. Beloved hearer, you are a professed Christian. Do you

serve in the church after this model? You may ask what I mean. It is this; in coming up to the house of God, do you come there that you may worship God? When you teach in the Sunday school, is it merely that you may take your share with your fellow Christians, or do you teach as unto God? You speak, my brother, in God's name—do you not sometimes find yourself preaching otherwise than as unto God? You engage in prayer in the prayer meeting; my dear friend, do you ever raise the question in your mind, "I wonder whether my prayer is liked by those who listen to it?" You forget that prayer is to be viewed as unto *God,* and that all the service of the Christian is not towards man, nor towards the church, though it has its bearings in both of these directions, but its main bent and bearing is towards God, and to do everything as for the Most High is the most important of duties. To live in this world—

> "Careless, myself a dying man,
> Of dying men's esteem."

To ask myself *never* what Mr. So-and-So thinks of me, "Shall I be commended, or shall I meet with censure?" but to say, "As I serve my God, and not my fellow men, what will the great Master say to me? What will He say of this, my service? How will it appear in His sight? Will it be gold, silver, precious stones, or will it, like wood, hay, and stubble, be consumed in the fire?" This is the true way in which to work and live! Note, then, before I come to the text to enter fully into its teaching, that whether it is service, or teaching, or suffering, or giving, the main point is to perform it as unto the Lord, and if the church would see to this, she would find her strength; she would serve God after a nobler, and more acceptable manner, for He is a Spirit, and they who serve Him, serving Him in spirit and in truth, would serve Him more boldly, more abundantly,

and more acceptably through Jesus Christ. This is then, upon the outside of the text; "God loves a cheerful giver." We learn that as giving is a part of Christian service, the right way to do it is the way which God will Himself, accept, and that that way is the giving *cheerfully*. "God loves a cheerful giver."

I do not mean to be very long upon any one point, but first shall notice very briefly *what a cheerful giver is;* secondly, *why the Lord loves such;* and then thirdly, will it be necessary to say even a word or two upon *why we who are His people should be such?*

I. First, **WHAT IS MEANT BY A CHEERFUL GIVER?**

The rest of the verse tells us what is *not* meant, and so helps us to see what is intended. "Not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver." "Not grudgingly," not giving as though you wished you could avoid it, and therefore giving as little as possible; not counting the pennies, and reckoning them to be as precious as drops of blood, but giving with ease, spontaneity, freeness, pleasure—this is a cheerful giver. To be this, one must give *proportionately*, for cheerful givers reckon how much they should give, how much as good stewards they may be expected at their hands; he who has a large income gives grudgingly if he gives no more than one who has but a tenth as much; he who has but few expenses, and lives at a small cost—if he gives no more than another man who has a large family, and large expenses, cannot be said to give cheerfully! He evidently gives grudgingly if he does not give *proportionately*. Much has been said about giving a tenth of one's income to the Lord; I think that is a Christian duty which none should for a moment, question. If it were a duty under the Jewish law, much more is it so now, under the Christian dispensation; but it is a great mistake to suppose that the Jew only gave a tenth—he gave very, very, very much more than that! The tenth was the payment which he *must* make, but after that came all the free-will offerings, all the various gifts at different seasons of the

year, so that, perhaps he gave a *third*—much more near that, certainly, than a tenth! And at this present day it is a strange thing that the followers of idols, such as the Hindus, give very nearly that proportion of their substance, and thus they utterly shame the generosity of many who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ. I do not, however, like to lay down any rules for God's people, for the Lord's New Testament is not a great book of rules; it is not a book of the letter, for that kills; it is the book of the Spirit, which teaches us rather, the soul of generosity, than the body of it; and instead of writing laws upon stones or paper, it writes laws upon the *heart*. Give, dear friends, as you have purposed in your heart, and give proportionately as the Lord has prospered you; and do not make your estimate of what you ought to give by what will appear *respectable,* or by what is *expected* from you by other people. Give as in the sight of the Lord, as He loves a cheerful giver; and as a cheerful giver is a proportionate giver, take care that you, like a good steward, keep just accounts towards the great King.

But I have said that a cheerful giver is also a *willing* giver, one who does not need to be "bled," as we sometimes say. He does not need that the knife should be constantly used upon him; he is not like the young grape which must be pressed and squeezed to get the wine out because it is not ripe; but a cluster bursting with invigorating juice! We ought to be like the honeycomb, dropping spontaneously with virgin honey, all too glad if we may but be accepted in our gifts through Him who is the altar, and who renders both the offerer and the offering acceptable unto God! We ought not to need to be preached at, to be exhorted, and to be pressed by public appeals, and private solicitations! It should be said of us as of the church at Corinth, "Touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you." Be a proportionate giver, then, and a willing giver.

A man who gives to God cheerfully *has got beyond the serf-like, slavish spirit;* the slave brings his pittance, which he is obliged to pay, and puts it down at the task-master's feet, and goes his way in misery; but the dear child, so pleased to give its Father what it can, places its little offering into the Father's treasury, as much as possible unobserved of men, beholds the Father smile, and goes its way rejoicing. You are not under the law but under grace! You are not, therefore, to *give* or to *do* anything to God as of compulsion, as though you heard the old Mosaic whip cracking in your ears; you are not to crouch before the Lord as the child of Hagar the bondwoman, fresh from Arabia, and from the trembling of Sinai! You are to advance cheerfully as one who has come to Mount Zion, as the child of promise, as Isaac, whose name is laughter—rejoicing that you are enabled, and favored, and privileged to do anything for Him who loved you to the death.

The cheerful giver is one who gives very earnestly, and there is a way of giving earnestly, especially when the gift is that of your time or of your service. Some give God their time on the Lord's Day, but they are half asleep; some give Him their efforts in the school, or the classes, or street-preaching, but they never seem to throw their souls into their engagements; what the church needs, nowadays, is more of cheerful, whole-hearted service. Does it not make the flesh crawl on your bones to hear some men preach? A word today, and another word tomorrow—the chilly discourse is spoken so softly, (when they might speak loudly enough, if they would), that you can see they have not stirred *their* souls with the theme that they wish to put into *your* souls! Under such preachers, congregations become "small by degrees, and beautifully less," because they are under the conviction that the preacher cannot have anything to say that he thinks worth saying, or otherwise he would speak out in clear, earnest tones. Oh, if all the ministers

of Christ, and all the deacons, and elders, and Sunday school teachers, and street-preachers, and city missionaries were all on fire, what different men they would be! If the service were all cheerful service in the sense of being intense, full of force, the man's whole manhood being thrown into it, what bright and happy seasons of revival we might expect, for in this sense, "God loves a cheerful giver" who comes not to worship service to do duty, or because it is a matter of routine, or the clock has struck, and the people need him—but comes because he loves to tell of Jesus' love! He comes because he loves to try to win souls; he comes because he loves to declare the whole counsel of God; he comes because he loves to look those dear children in the face, and pray with them; he comes because he loves to take those lads alone, and teach them of the Savior who bled for sinners! Where there is living soul-service there must be a blessing! But if we do not serve our Master cheerfully, and consequently do not do it *earnestly*, God will not love the service, and nothing will come of it.

One thing I know, that a cheerful giver always wishes that he could give 10 times as much; a cheerful doer always wants to have more capacity for doing; a cheerful preacher always wishes that he had a thousand tongues, for not one should be silent. beloved, do you ever remember wishing that for once you could get out of this dull common life, and climb into the higher spiritual life? Did you ever read of Henry Martyn's life? He was a polished scholar, a man of learning and repute, and he gave up all for Christ to go to Persia, and there to die without having seen a convert, perhaps, and yet content to live—content to die in far-off lands for his Master's sake! Did you ever read of Brainerd, far away among the Indians, toiling on, and in his old age teaching a poor black child its letters, and thanking God that when he could not preach, he could yet teach the child its letters, and so do something for his dear Lord

who had done so much for him? Yes, did you ever read and think of even St. Francis Xavier, papist as he was? Yet what a man; how consecrated, how zealous; with all his errors, and all his mistakes, and all his faults, yet passing over sea and land, penetrating forests, and daring death a thousand times, that he might spread abroad the poor misguided doctrines which he believed. As much as I hate his teaching, I admire his all but miraculous zeal! When I think of some such men; when I would gladly censure their mistakes, I can only censure myself that I cannot even so much as think, or cannot do *more* than think of living such a life as they lived! O that we could learn the secret of entire consecration! O that we could receive a vehement panting and longing after the perfect dedication of ourselves unto our Lord and Master! Then we would make our everyday toil to be lustrous with the glory of holiness; then we would burn like seraphs while we toiled here below as common men; then we would teach, and preach, and pray, and work, and give with such a spirit, and such a divine Unction that the world would wonder from where we came, and where we had learned these sacred arts! It is *this* cheerfulness, *this* heartiness, *this* whole-heartedness, *this* intenseness, *this* fire of the soul which God loves! O that we may have it! O may we get it, for such doers, and such givers God loves!

II. Secondly, **WHY DOES GOD LOVE A CHEERFUL GIVER?**

Remember, this is not a sentence spoken to all sorts of men; this was addressed to the members of a Christian church. God loves them all, but He has special complacency in those whom, by His grace, He has taught to be cheerful givers. A cheerful giver who was not a Christian would not at all come under the statement here made; he would still be one with whom God is angry every day; it is of *saved* men, *Christian* men—men joined to the Christian church, that it is said, "God loves a cheerful giver."

Now observe, first, God loves a cheerful giver *for He made the world on the plan of cheerful giving,* and a great artist loves all that is consistent with his plan. I say God has made the whole world on this plan, so I will show you. Look at the sun; what an orb of splendor; what a glorious creation of God! Why is it bright? Because it is giving away its light! Why is it glorious? Because it is scattering its beams on all sides! Imagine that it should say, "I will give no more light"; where would be its brightness? If it should say, "I will no more scatter my beams"; where would be its luster? It is in the magnificent generosity of that great father of the day that his glory consists! It is the grandest of orbs to us, because it gives us so much of that vitalizing force which is heat, and light, and life. Behold the moon, the fair queen of the night. Why do we rejoice in her? Because what light she receives from the sun, she gives again to us! If she were not to give her light, who would speak of her? If she were a selfish orb, absorbing into herself all the sun's rays; if she were an ungenerous circle bounding up, and storing within herself every sunbeam, what would she be? We would not even know of her existence, probably, except when as a black speck, she passed between us, and some bright luminary; but it is because she scatters her beams over the poverty of midnight that we rejoice and thank God for her wealth of beauty! Even yonder twinkling stars which seem so small to us—do not their brightness and their radiance consist in their *giving*? "One star differs from another star in glory," because one star differs from another star in what it is able to yield to *us*. So it is with the heavenly bodies. Now let us turn then, to terrestrial bodies. Look at this earth beneath our feet; what is its excellence but in that which it gives? There are parts of the earth sublimely solitary, such as the Great Sahara; such tracts of land give nothing, and what are they? Deserts! Who commends them? Go over that land once so blessed, Palestine, and tread the soil

which yields so little; is it not thought to be accursed? And why? Because all the elements of fertility that are within it are unused, and not brought forth for the good of man. But where are the happy countries? Where are the countries where men rejoice to praise the fatherland? Are they not those fertile hills and plains which laugh with superabundant harvests given forth from earth's stores that men may make merry and be glad? Which is the land most chosen of our race—the Beulah of the nations? Not the hoarding land; not the thirsty land that will take in everything and give out nothing; not the hungry soil which the farmer tills, but which refuses the wheat sheaves and the barley mow. Walk abroad in this world, and think for a minute; thousands of years ago, before our race was on this planet, it is probable that there were vast forests waving in the sunbeams—and what were they doing? Giving up themselves to fall and die; and why? Why, to form the vast stores which mother earth held in her cellars, till, at last, when man came he broke the lock, and entered into possession of vast stores of coal which aid our arts and sciences! Coal makes us warm and happy in the depths of winter, so that we rejoice to see how that which was stored by generous nature one day is given up tomorrow freely for our use! Why, there is not a tree that grows, but is giving forth perpetually; there is not a flower that bloom, but its very sweetness lies in its shedding its fragrance in the air! All the rivers run into the sea, the sea feeds the clouds, the clouds empty out their treasures, the earth gives back the rain in fertility, and so it is an endless chain of giving generosity! Generosity reigns supreme in nature! There is nothing in this world but lives by giving except a covetous man, and such a man is a piece of grit in the machinery; he is out of gear with the universe. Man is a wheel running in the opposite direction to the wheels of God's great engine; he is a balking horse in the team; he is one who will not do what all the forces of the world

are doing; he is a monster! He is not fit for this world at all! He has not realized the motion of the spheres; he keeps not step with the march of the ages; he is out of date; he is out of place; he is out of God's order altogether. But the cheerful giver is marching to the music of the spheres, he is in order with God's great natural laws, and God, therefore, loves him, since He sees His own work in him.

Observe, secondly, that God loves a cheerful giver because divine grace has placed such a man in order with the laws of redemption, as well as the laws of nature. And what are these? We who are called, "Calvinists," delight in asserting that the whole economy of the gospel is that of divine grace; it is all of free grace from first to last, and not in any measure or degree a matter of debt and reward. Salvation is not a thing to be earned, and to be won by men, but is the result and exercise of the free grace of God. If there is election, it is *free* election springing never from any goodness in us; if there is redemption, "thanks be unto God for His unspeakable *gift."* If there is calling, if there is justification, if there is sanctification—everywhere we see the freeness of the work of the great giver! Never is anything in God stinted, never churlish, never grudging; He gives generously, and withholds not in any good thing; God stands in the work of grace as a wondrous giver. Now the Christian, or the *professed* Christian, who is no giver, or being a giver is not a cheerful giver, is out of order with the system which revolves around the covenant of grace, and the cross of Christ. He is out of tune with the blood and wounds of Jesus; he is out of order with the eternal purposes of the Most High; he is not running in the current of divine grace at all! He ought to be under the law, though there, indeed, he comes not up to its letter, and as the spirit of the gospel is all freeness, and grace, and love, and bounty—the man is out of harmony with it, and does not understand it at all. Because, then, the cheerful giver, made so

by divine grace, keeps tune with redemption and nature after his own measure and calling, he is commended of the Lord.

Again, God loves a cheerful giver because *He loves anything that makes His people happy.* And well He understands that the spirit of self-denial; the spirit of love to others, is the surest source of happiness that can be found in the human breast. He who lives for himself must be wretched; he who can only rejoice in what he, himself, enjoys, has but narrow channels for his happiness; but he who delights to make *others* blessed, and who delights to glorify *God*, and who can deny his own flesh, and his own wishes if he may but honor his Master, and bless the world—*he* it is who is the happy man! And as God delights in the happiness which is the result, so He delights in the cheerful giving which is the cause.

God delights in a cheerful giver, again, because *in such a believer he sees the work of His Spirit.* It takes a great deal of grace to make some men cheerful givers; with some the last part of their nature that ever gets sanctified is their pockets! The grace of God works its way into the morality of their trade, and into the actions of the house, but they do not appear to recognize that their substance is to be as much consecrated as their hearts. Beloved, I know there are some of the Lord's people who look upon all they have most sacredly as being not their own, and who, not as a theory, but as a matter of daily *practice*, make money for Christ, and give money to Christ, and are never so happy as when they can do a little more than they were accustomed to do to advance His kingdom according to their ability. But, on the other hand, there are some of quite another temperament, in whom the grace of God has to knock hard before it gets an answer! They know what they *ought* to do very well, but yet find the purse strings grow tight, and the fingers that are used for giving nearly paralyzed! And really, when they do give a shilling, it appears to be as great an effort of self-

denial as when others, according to their proportion, have given pounds. But the Lord loves not to see His people hugging this world so; He loves to see that they have outgrown the beggarly elements; that they are getting to love the *spiritual* above the carnal, to love *Him* above themselves, and to seek the treasures that are *above,* and not the treasures which are on the earth. I am sure it grieves the Spirit of God when He sees the blood-bought as money-grasping as those who are of the world; it grieves the Spirit, and He often withdraws His comforting influence when He sees His servants falling down to the dull, dead, brutish level of men of the world, whose cry is, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and with what shall we be clothed?" He would have His people seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness! He would have them delight themselves in the Lord, and not in the creatures which flesh and blood pine after; He would have them drink from purer streams than the muddy rivers of earth; He would have them covet after better riches than these Egyptian treasures which must perish in the using, and from which we must so soon be taken away.

But there is one reason why God loves a cheerful giver which I must dwell on at some length, namely, *because He is a cheerful giver Himself!* Man generally loves that which is like he is; we gratify ourselves in that way, and generally our affections go after an object that is somewhat congruous to our own character. Now the Lord is the most cheerful of all givers! I want you to think of that for a minute. "Who spared not His own Son"? Oh, what a gift was that! Mothers, could you give your sons? Fathers, could you spare your children? Well, yes, perhaps you might for your country, but you could not for your *enemies*. But God, the cheerful giver, spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, as says the word. And since then, what a cheerful giver He has been! He has given without

our asking; we did not ask Him to make the covenant of grace; we did not ask Him to elect us; we did not ask Him to redeem us—these things were done before we were born! We did not ask Him to call us by His grace, for alas, we did not know the value of that call, and we were dead in trespasses and sins. But He gave to us freely of His unsought, but boundless love. Preeminent grace came to us, outrunning all our desires, and all our wills, and all our prayers. He first made us pray; He gave us the spirit of supplication, or else we had never prayed; He gave us the will to come to Him, or else we should have remained afar off. He was a cheerful giver to us, then, and when we went to Him with broken hearts, how cheerfully did He give us pardon! How did He run, and have compassion upon us, and fall upon our neck and kiss us; how cheerfully did He bring us to the banquet with music and with dancing, because His son that was dead was alive again, and He that was lost was found!—

"Many days have passed since then,
Many changes have we seen,"

but there has been no change in Him! He has been a cheerful giver still! We have needed grace every day, and He gives generously, and upbraids not. When we have been to Him, and have asked for an egg, He has never given us a scorpion; we have asked for bread, and He has never given us a stone, but He has given His Holy Spirit to us. Oh, the generosity of God in providence to some of us! It is not long ago since we were poor enough, but He has been pleased to give us all we can desire. There are some of you here who were on the bed of sickness, and were wondering what would become of that little family of yours for which you were the only breadwinner. But God, the cheerful giver, provided for you; He set you up again,

and sent you once again in health and strength to your work. Others of you have passed through great straits, but still the everlasting arms have been underneath you, and though the young lions do lack and suffer hunger, yet you, having sought the Lord, have not needed any good thing. He is a cheerful giver! Ah, poor sinners, you who are not saved, I wish you knew how glad God is to give His mercy! He is the most cheerful giver in the universe! You must not think He will grudge you; if you come to Him for pardon of sin, God is abundantly ready to pardon you; if you seek His face, you shall not have to clamor after Him as though He were deaf or unwilling to hear you; He will listen to the cries of the penitent! He will listen to the desires of those who would forsake their sins, and find Christ; if you will but trust the Lord Jesus, you shall find Him the most cheerful giver, and the kindest friend that you have ever dreamed of.

Brothers and sisters, we shall very soon find God to be a cheerful giver. Some of our friends, this week, have found Him so; they asked, for they were very sick, that He would sustain them, and He made their bed in their sickness, and put underneath them His kind arms; and then they asked that He would give them an abundant entrance into the kingdom of His dear Son, and He did it; He helped them to bear their witness to His faithfulness. He set open before them the gates of pearl; He did not deny them the harps of gold, nor the throne of Christ, Himself, but as a cheerful giver, He welcomed His poor weary people to His own eternal banquet, and He made them sit at His own right hand! So will He do with us, for He is a cheerful giver—O that God would grant us grace to be more cheerful givers in the future than we have been in the past!

III. I shall close with only a sentence or two as to **WHY WE WHO LOVE THE LORD, ESPECIALLY IN THIS HOUSE**

SHOULD SEEK TO BE CHEERFUL GIVERS WHOM GOD LOVES.

There are many reasons, but tonight we need not urge them all. One is that all we have we owe to Him; I have heard of one who failed in business, who in his better times had helped some of his workmen into business, and they had prospered. It was said, "Oh, they will help him; he did them such good turns in his day of prosperity, they will help him." I know not whether they did or not, but this I do know, that He who took us up when we were naked, for so we came into this world, He who took us up when we were more than naked, filthy and defiled, for so we became through our sin, and through our original depravity; He who took us from off the dunghill, yes, from out of the fire itself, and made us what we are, and wrapped us about with His righteousness, and gave us of His mercy—He deserves all and more than all that we can give Him. Oh, what shall we do for our Savior to praise Him? What shall we *not* do? Lord, as everything is due to You; take everything, and let us make no reserve!

Remember always, dear brothers and sisters *that you are saved—you*, when you might have been damned; *you*, when you had no will at anytime to be saved! You are saved; your sins are blotted out; the righteousness of Christ is your royal apparel. You are not only saved, the Holy Spirit dwells *in* you; you are a priest, you are a king unto God; you are an heir of heaven, the blood imperial runs in your veins; you are one of the peerage of the skies, a prince of the blood. Oh, will you not live above the lives of others? Will you not seek by these high dignities, these priceless gifts, and these astounding favors to consecrate yourselves—spirit, soul, and body—to Him who is your Father, your heaven, your God? Brothers and sisters, you may well be anxious to be cheerful givers when you remember that the time for giving will soon be over; there is no giving in yonder skies.

God's choice treasury, which is the poor man's pocket, will not be held out for you to fill there; there will be none of the sons of need there—no little feet cold for need of shoes, no little hands weak for need of bread; there will be no starving women, and no hungry men; no meeting houses that need building; no missionaries who need sending forth, no ships that need to be chartered to bear them beyond the seas; no ministers of Christ standing in need of your aid. You will be beyond all such calls then, and if there could be any regret in heaven, it would be that in heaven these duties must forever cease. O give then, while you still can as cheerful givers!

And, last of all, we have need of a giving God, and therefore let us be cheerful givers. Remember that story which Mrs. Stowe has so well written? I am afraid I cannot tell it again, certainly not in her words, but it is something to this effect. There was a merchant, she says, who had prospered a great deal in business; he had built a house in the country, and he had enlarged it, and had laid out his grounds at great expense. When he went to his office, he was called upon by a collector for some society, and he replied to his requests, "I really cannot afford to give anything; I have so many calls, I cannot do it." Well, he was a man who had usually been very generous, and it touched his conscience a little afterwards to think that he should begin to stint in what he gave to his Lord. At night, when the wife and family had retired to rest, he sat by the fireside meditating, and he said to himself, "I really do not know whether I was wise to build this house; it has brought a deal of expense; new furniture is needed. I have been introduced into a new rank of society; expenses have increased, the girls need more for clothes— everything is on a more lavish scale, and yet I have been stinting the Lord. I fear I have done amiss; I do not feel easy about it at all." As he was so thinking it is supposed that he fell asleep, but if so it was well for him that he did so, for

suddenly the door opened, and there came into the room a very meek and lowly stranger. He advanced to him and said, "Sir, I have called upon you to ask your help for a society which sends the gospel to the heathen; they are perishing, perishing for lack of knowledge. You are wealthy; will you give me help to send them the word of life?" He said, "You must excuse me; really, my expenses are so great that I must curtail. I am quite unable to give you anything; I must decline." The stranger looked at him with a mournful glance, and said, "Perhaps you think that the work is too far away, and you do not give because the money is to be sent beyond the seas. I will then tell you that there is a ragged school down a part of the city, near your house of business, and it is about to be shut up for lack of funds; and there are the poor little ragged children, the Arabs of your streets, ignorant of the right way—will you give me a subscription to that objective?" The merchant was a little vexed to be asked again, and he said, "Stop troubling me; I cannot afford it; I cannot give you anything." The stranger brushed a tear from his eyes, and he said, "Well, then, I must ask you at least for something for the Bible Society. That, you see, lies at the root of everything; it gives away the word of God, and surely, if you cannot afford to give to the Missionary Society, or the Ragged School, you will give for the word of God itself." "No," he said, "I have told you I cannot do it," and then—and then the aspect of the stranger seemed to change, and though He still was meek and lowly, yet His countenance became majestic! There was a glory in His face, and yet there were lines of grief, and He said, softly and very sternly, "Five years ago that little daughter of yours, with the fair ringlets, lay sick of the fever, and you prayed in the bitterness of your soul that the darling of your heart might not be taken from you, but that you might be spared that heavy stroke. Who heard that prayer, and gave you back your child?" The merchant covered his face with

his hands, and felt ashamed. "Ten years ago," said the same voice, "you were in great difficulties. Bills were returned upon you; you were on the verge of bankruptcy; your hair seemed as if it would turn gray with worry. To whom did you apply in the hour of trouble, and who heard you, and who found you friends who tided you over your difficulties, when other houses were crashing, and wealthier men than you were failing on every side? Who did that for you?" "Once more," said the stranger, "fifteen years ago you felt the burden of your sins. You went up and down the world wringing your hands with fear, and crying, 'God have mercy upon me!' Your heart was overwhelmed within you; who, in that hour, spoke the forgiving words which cancelled all your sins? Who took all your iniquities upon Himself?" The merchant sobbed aloud, and trembled much when the voice said, "If you will never ask anything of Me again, I will never ask anything of you." The man fell on his face before the visitor, and said, "Take all, my blessed Lord; forgive my shameful ingratitude to You, and help me never in the future to deny you anything!" Whether it was a dream or not, it is certain that that merchant became one of the Christian princes of America, and gave to the cause of Christ as few had ever done before.

"God loves a cheerful giver," and you see His claims upon you! Go your way, merchants, and give largely as God gives to you; go your way, you trades people, and scatter as you can, for God first gives you the means; go your way, you working men, and toiling women, and give according to your ability. Give, you rich, because you are rich, and give, you poor, because you cannot afford to get poorer, and you are likely to do so unless you offer God His portion. But have you first given Him your *heart?* Have you put your *trust* in Jesus? If not, this sermon is not for you; but if your heart belongs to my Lord, and has been washed in His precious blood, let my text sink deep into your

ears, and deeper still, into your hearts—"God loves a cheerful giver!"

836 SOWN LIGHT – PS. 97:11

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, October 11th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." — Psalm 97:11

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Psalm 97 and 99]

THIS APPEARS to be the teaching of the entire Psalm, and the verse which follows, "Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous," is intended to be the practical inference drawn from the whole of it. God would have His people believe that better times are in store for them, and in the faith of the coming good, He would have them, even now, rejoice and be exceedingly glad. If you will read the Psalm, you will notice that every verse may give us some strengthening of our faith as to the *future* blessedness of those who fear the Lord. The first verse declares that "the Lord reigns." Shall so righteous a one sit upon the throne of God, and shall not those who fear Him have their reward? If He is King, will He allow His loyal subjects to endure damage? Will He not ultimately come to their rescue? The second verse tells us that "clouds and darkness are round about Him," and this explains why for the present the upright in heart may seem to be forgotten. God's dispensations are not always clear; it is His to conceal a thing; He wraps Himself about in mystery, for the brightness of His glory is dark with excessive

light; if His way is unsearchable, and His design deep beyond human understanding, we need not be surprised if we find it so in the dispensations of His providence towards His people. But still, as the second verse continues, "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne," we may be certain, therefore, that He will not be unrighteous to forget our work of faith, and labor of love; and that in dealing out judgment, both to His saints and to the ungodly, He will neither forget to reward the first, nor to condemn the second. The third verse, which describes the glory of the divine power as displayed in deeds of vengeance, when the enemies of God are burnt up by fire, goes to prove that He will, with equal certainty, reward His people, for He who is stern to punish, surely will not be unrighteous to forget the gracious service of His saints. If He has promised, He will be as certain to keep His promises as He has been to fulfill His threats. He will not be true on the black side towards the undeserving, and then be false on the bright side towards those who are made meritorious through the righteousness of His dear Son. He who keeps the thunder, and by-and-by will launch it from His hands, also reserves His mercy for His chosen, and favor for His people. Indeed, the sixth verse declares that the very constitution of the universe proves this; that every star twinkling in its sphere proclaims the righteousness and wisdom of God, and therefore, since for Him to be righteous is for His people ultimately to be blessed, we conclude that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

With no other preface than this, I shall take you at once to this very singular text, dwelling first upon the remarkable metaphor here used—*sown* light; and then, enlarging upon that metaphor, taking you to see the *sowing;* and thirdly, to survey and measure the *field;* fourthly we will take an outlook upon the *harvest* in the future.

I. First, then, the metaphor is a rather singular one, and yet full of poetry—**LIGHT IS SOWN**. We can very soon catch the idea if we follow Milton in his speaking of the morning—

> "Now morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime
> Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl."

The sun, like a sower, scatters broadcast his beams of light upon the once dark earth; look up at night upon the sky bespangled with stars, and it seems as though God scattered them like gold dust upon the floor of heaven in picturesque irregularity, thereby sowing light! Or if you need a fact which comes nearer to the sowing of light, more literally than anything which our poets have written, think of our vast beds of coal which are literally so much sown light. The sun shone upon primeval forests, and the monstrous ferns grew and expanded under the quickening influence; they fell, as fall the leaves of chestnut, and of oak in these autumns of our latter days, and there they lie stored deep down in the great cellars of nature for man's use—so much sown light, I say, which springs up beneath the hand of man in harvests of flame; which flood our streets with light, and cheer our hearths with heat!

Sown light, then, is neither unpoetical nor yet altogether unliteral; there is such a thing as a matter-of-fact, and we may use the expression rightly enough, without grotesqueness of metaphor. Understand then, that happiness, joy, gladness, symbolized by light, have been sown by God in fields that will surely yield their harvest for all those whom, by His grace, He has made upright in heart. Sown light signifies, first, that light has been diffused. That which is sown is *scattered*. Before sowing it was in the bag, or stored up in the granary, but the sowing scatters it along the furrows. There was always happiness in the mind of God; He is unspeakably blessed in Himself; we cannot

dissociate the idea of Godhead from that of infinite delight. But all this happiness was nothing to *us*—we could not reach it; God might have been infinitely blessed, but we might have been shut up in hell, gnawing our iron bonds in the desperation of unutterable agony! But in due time, according to the eternal purpose, God sowed happiness for His people. He took it, as it were, out of Himself, and cast it broadcast in the fields of His eternal purposes, and in the decrees of His divine providence, that there might be a harvest, not for Himself—for He was happy enough, but for all those whom He gave to Christ, who are made righteous in His righteousness, and upright through His Spirit. Thank God, you who love Jesus, and are resting upon His Atonement, that God's happiness is not kept to Himself, but is diffused for you and the whole company of His elect! And that the pleasures which are at God's right hand forevermore are not kept within their secret springs, but made to flow like a river, that you with all the blood-bought may drink to the fullest!

Seed that is sown is not in hand; after the farmer has scattered his wheat, he cannot say, "Here it is." It is out of sight; it is gone from him. You may walk over the fields for the next few weeks, and see no trace of it, and fools might say, "Ah, now so much wheat is gone from him! He is so much the poorer; he has it not." So the gladness which belongs to the righteous is not to be regarded as a thing of the *present;* their great store of pleasure is yet to come—it is light that is sown, not light that now gleams upon their eyes; it is a gladness that has been buried beneath the clods for a special purpose, not a gladness which is now spread upon the table as bread that has been baked in the oven. The believer's greatest happiness is not like bread ready for food—it is seed buried by the sower. Brothers and sisters, let us remember that this world is not our rest—

"We look for a city that hands have not piled,
We seek for a country by sin undefiled."

To look for happiness here were to seek for the living among the dead! Christ is not here, for He has risen, and our joy is not here, for our joy has risen with Him! Seed sown, then, is not within sight, and the great bulk of the Christian's happiness is not a thing of present enjoyment; it is not what he can see with the *eyes*, and hear with the *ears*, and touch with the *hands;* it is a matter of faith; it is not to be feasted on today, but for a purpose it is withheld until patience has had her perfect work, and seen her joy blossom and bud, and open and ripen under the smile of the Lord her God.

As seed sown is not visible, *so it is not expected that it shall be seen or enjoyed tomorrow*. "The farmer waits for the precious fruits of the earth." Only little children put their seeds into the ground, and then turn up the dirt to discover whether the seeds are growing in the morning. It is said of the northern nations, near the pole, and said truthfully, that they sowed their barley in the morning, and reap it at night because the sun goes not down for four mouths at a time; but in sober truth we must not expect to have the rewards of divine grace given to us immediately as we believe. This is the time for running, not for tarrying to gaze upon the prize; this is the hour for the battle, not yet may we rest on our laurels; there must be a trial of our patience, and our faith. God delights that His servants should be put through many exercises and ordeals in order that the praise of the glory of His grace may be manifest in them, and through them, to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. Wait, then, Christian; be content to wait. The Bridegroom comes quickly! Rest assured of that, and if you think He lingers, ask for greater patience that you may patiently work on, continuing steadfast and unmovable, and always

abounding in the work of the Lord. Expect not your full reward of joy tomorrow. Your lot is on the other side of Jordan; the bells of your wedding day shall ring out in another world, and your coronation will be received in the ivory palaces upon which the sun has never shone! You are espoused to a Husband who is not here; you look for a kingdom far above these changing skies! Have patience, then, till the great hour shall come, and the King shall descend to take His own.

But while seed sown is not in sight, and is not expected to be seen tomorrow, yet it is not lost. No one but a person without sense would say that the farmer has lost so much of his capital when he has cast it in the form of seed-corn into the furrows. No, sir, he reckons that he has *gained* when he has sown, for the seed in the granary was worth so much, but that in the furrow is worth so much *more* on account of the labor expended in the sowing. The farmer counts it gain to have sown his corn; he has transferred his treasure from one bank into another; he does not reckon that any of it has been lost. And so with the happiness of a Christian; we may today seem less happy than the gay worldling who flaunts himself in the sunlight of human approbation, but it is not a loss to renounce such inferior joys! The postponement of our joys; our waiting, our letting joy lay by at interest, our tarrying for a moment that our position may be the richer, when we come into our estate, is no loss! Joy self-denied is not lost! Lost, my brothers and sisters? Lost, the happiness of a single hour in which we have wept for sin? Lost, the happiness of a single moment in which we have suffered affliction for Christ's sake through persecution and slander? No, verily, it is put to our account, and the record of it remains in the eternal archives against the day when the judge of all the earth shall measure out the portions of His people!

Seed sown is not lost, *but is actually still in possession*. If a farmer had to sell his field, he would, of course, ask much more for that in which the seed was sown, than for one which was remaining fallow, because he counts that seed sown is still his own property. He cannot see it, but he knows it is there among those crumbling clods; he reckons that sown wheat, and puts it down in every inventory of his property. That seed which is under the soil is as certainly his as that which remains in the stack, or bound up in the sacks—and so you may reckon the joys of the hereafter as your own, and you ought so to reckon them, for they are the best part of your estate! They are yours, though you do not enjoy them; yours today the seraph's wing, and the angel's harp; yours today the cherubic song, and the bliss of the immortals; the presence of the Lord, and the vision of His face. Come, count upon the resurrection, it is yours; upon the glory that follows it, it is yours; upon the millennium with its entire splendor, it is yours; upon eternity with its unutterable joys—all these things are yours, and you are Christ's—and Christ is God's! You cannot see the heavenly light. You expect not to see it as yet, but as far from being lost, it is yours this very day, and you only need by faith to write it down upon the tablets of hope!

Sown seed is *in the custody of God;* Jehovah is the farmer's banker. Who can take care of those bags of wheat which have been thrown out from the hand during the last few weeks? Who, indeed, but the covenant God who has said, "While the earth remains, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, shall not cease"? There may come the rotting under the clods, the worm, the bird, the mildew, the blast—there may come the long drought or the too plenteous moisture, but the farmer has scarcely a hand in the future destiny of his wheat and barley; the crop remains with God. You merchants may fancy you can do without the Lord, but the man who has to till the soil is

obliged to feel, if he has any sense at all, his entire dependence upon the God of the rain clouds, and the Lord of the sun. So, beloved, here is our comfort; the light that is sown for the righteous is in the custody of *God*. Our future happiness and our eternal bliss are kept by the great guardian of Israel who does neither slumber nor sleep! Be not afraid, therefore, that you shall lose your heaven, for Christ keeps it for you; He has gone to take possession of it in your name, as your representative, and He will not allow any to rob you of your entailed heritage! He will come a second time to take you to Himself to enjoy the portion which He has prepared for you. Oh, blessed fact that the joys of the hereafter are in such keeping! Brothers and sisters, we have not to fight to maintain our rights in the eternal land; we have not to dispute in courts of law in order to maintain our claim to the everlasting inheritance! He is at the Father's side, the Man of love, the Crucified, and He takes care that all shall be safe and well for the people of His eternal choice! Light is sown for the righteous, that is to say it is put into the custody of heaven, where it will be infallibly safe!

A thing that is sown is not only put into God's custody, but it is *put there with a purpose—that it may come back to us greatly multiplied*. The believer gives up in this life his self-seeking; he suffers some degree of self-denial; he yields up his own boasts to trust in Christ's righteousness, and he thereby makes a good bargain! What if he should be made poor by being honest, or if he should have to suffer through following Christ? The return, the reward, the recompense—these are so exceedingly abundant that the present light affliction is not worthy to be compared with it! We suffer for a *moment* that we may reign *forever!* We stoop for a second that we may be lifted up world without end! We shall get back the seed-corn multiplied 10,000s times 10,000s, and we shall bless and magnify forever

and ever the glorious Sower who sowed such a harvest for us! The drift, the whole drift and meaning of this sown light is just this—that the righteous have their best things yet to come! God has begun very graciously with some of us; indeed, so well that our loudest music falls flat compared with the praise which He deserves; and are we sometimes afraid that God will be worse in the future than He has been in the past? O think not so harshly of Him! You know what kind of feast the great Master makes; He does not bring forth His best wine first, and then afterwards brings forth the worst. Oh, no! He puts upon His table the worst, if so I may say, first—good as that is, and then we may say of Him afterwards, "You have kept the best wine until now." The summers of our God do not begin with fervent heat, and end with cold. God is not one who flatters us at the first, to deal sternly with us at the last; we shall go from strength to strength, from good to something better, and until life's happiness culminates in heaven's, we shall see more and more of the loving-kindness of the Lord. Our best is yet to come, and the mercy that is to come will be always coming, until life's end! There is a story told of Rowland Hill which I have no doubt is true because it is so characteristic of the man's eccentricity and generosity. Some one or other had given him 100 pounds to send to an extremely poor minister, but thinking it was too much to send him all at once, he sent him five pounds in a letter with simply these words inside the envelope, "More to follow." In a few days' time, the good man had another letter by the post, and letters by the post were rarities in those days; when he opened it there was five pounds again, with just these words, "And more to follow." A day or two after, there came another, and still the same words, "And more to follow." And so it continued 20 times, the good man being more and more astounded at these letters coming thus by post with always the sentence, "And more to follow." Now, every

blessing that comes from God is sent in just such an envelope, with the same message, "And more to follow." "I forgive you your sins, but there's more to follow." "I justify you in the righteousness of Christ, but there's more to follow." "I adopt you into My family, but there's more to follow." "I educate you for heaven, but there's more to follow." "I have helped you even to old age, but there's still more to follow." "I will bring you to the brink of Jordan, and bid you sit down and sing on its black banks; on the banks of the black stream, but there's more to follow. In the midst of that river, as you are passing into the world of spirits, My mercy shall still continue with you, and when you land in the world to come, there shall still be more to follow." Light is still sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

II. Secondly, having opened the metaphor of sown light, let us now speak of the **SOWING** itself.

When were the happiness and security of the righteous sown for them? Answer, there are three great Sowers, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, and all these have sown light for the chosen people. First, the Father, in long ages past, before the world was, it was in the eternal mind to ordain unto Himself a people who should show forth His praise. In His august mind it was determined that although His loved ones should fall in Adam, they should be raised in Christ; that they should be chosen over and above all their fellows, and in spite of their sins, should be loved with an everlasting love, should be kept in time, should be glorified in eternity. Now all those great decrees of God, of which He has revealed some inklings in His word, were so much sowing of light for the righteous; so much provision of gladness in the future for the upright in heart. Yes, I venture to say that there was not a decree of God which in some way or other did not promote the happiness of His people—not a single covenant provision, not a single

purpose of eternal wisdom, but was intended and adapted to bring joy and peace to them! As all the rivers run into the sea, so all the purposes of God worked together for this great central purpose of His— that He might have an elect people in whom His name should be glorified. Think now for a moment, beloved, of the thoughts of God to you. Long, I say, before the sun began to shine, what thoughts of love were in the bosom of the Father! Trace up the mercies of the present to those grand projects of the past, and praise and magnify the name of God that such unworthy sinners as we are should be the objects of such infinite conceptions! When the covenant, at length, was formed between the Father, the Son, and the blessed Spirit— when the decree began to take shape, and to be revealed; when in the volume of the book, covenant mercies were written down for us, all the tenure of that covenant—every line, and jot, and tittle was so much sowing of light for the righteous! Throughout the whole of that mysterious transaction in the cabinet chamber of eternity, when the Father pledged the Son, and the Son pledged the Father, and they entered into covenant engagements, one with the other, in their mysterious wisdom, every part of those stipulations, every grain of those engagements was made for a sowing of light for the righteous! And so, beloved, when time had come when man had fallen, the first promise that was ever spoken sowed light for the righteous! When Jesus Christ was given of the Father, His unspeakable gift, indeed, it was a sowing time of light for the saints, for in Him was light, and the light was the life of men! When the Father begets again unto a lively hope His people by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; when He adopts them into His family, and calls them His sons and daughters; when He receives the wanderers into His bosom, and feasts them at the table of His love, then in all that, light is being sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Yes,

and in the steering of the courses of the stars; in the ruling of the winds and tempests; in the government of nations—even in their crash, and in their fall, in the changes of events, and in all that comes from the right hand of the eternal God, light is always being sown by the great Father for the righteous whom He loves!

A second great Sower was *God the Son*. He sowed happiness for His people when He joined with the Father in covenant, and promised to be the substitute for His saints; but the actual sowing took place when He came on earth, and sowed Himself in death's dark sepulcher for us. Well did He Himself say, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone, but if it dies it brings forth much fruit." He dropped Himself like a priceless seed-corn into the tomb, and what fruit He has brought forth let heaven and all the blood-washed company declare! The flower that springs from His root is immortality and life! Jesus Christ has brought all manner of heavenly things unto His saints, and made them rich to all the intents of bliss by the sowing of Himself as the life of His people. Nor must you think that He served us alone, and promoted our happiness only by His stripes, and wounds, and bloody sweat, and death. No, beloved, when He rose from the dead, the fact of His resurrection was a preparing and storing up of future blessedness for His redeemed; when He ascended up on high, leading our captivity captive, did He not then scatter gladness for us? And when He received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, did He not accomplish a boundless sowing of light for the elect people? At this moment, standing as He does the High Priest of our profession, pleading before the Majesty of heaven, what are those pleadings but a sowing of happiness for us—a laying up of bliss which we possess today in measure, and shall enjoy hereafter without measure in His presence before the throne? Beloved, let me remind you

that in the government which Christ exercises as Mediator, even as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel, so does the Lord Jesus govern the world for the sake of His people. In everything that He does, He has a design towards His elect ones; He may pause and wait with much long-suffering, bearing long with the ungodly, but in that delaying there is a sowing of light for the elect! Every hour of delay shall have its recompense; and when He comes, when the clouds of heaven shall make Him a chariot, and the doors of eternity shall be opened, that He may go forth in all the pomp of His glory to judge the earth—then in that day light shall still be sown! And forever and ever while Jesus Christ lives the friend and patron of His chosen, He shall forever be preparing fresh joy for them who love Him—such as eye has not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Once more, *the Holy Spirit* is a third great Sower, sowing in another sense; sowing in a sense that comes nearer home to our experience. Light is sown for the righteous by the Holy Spirit; in the hour when He brought the law home with its terrors, and laid us, broken and mangled at the feet of Moses, He was sowing light for us. Our humbling was the preface to our exultation, and we have already proved it so. In that moment when we were subdued, humbled, and made to loathe our own righteousness, trampled into the very mire under a sense of weakness and death, He was sowing light for us. We did not know it; we thought that our destruction was near at hand, but oh those precious drops of penitent tears! Those blessed heartaches—what if I had said those *priceless* broken bones? Out of them has come, through Jesus Christ, our present joy and peace; it needed that we should be weaned from self; it was necessary that we should make the terrible discovery of our soul's depravity; and as we passed through all that darkness and gloom of heart, the Holy Spirit was sowing for us

our future perfection and glory at the right hand of Christ! Today that Blessed Spirit continues His sowing in us. every gracious thought; every stroke from the whip of affliction when sanctified; every down-casting of our proud looks; every discovery of our utter insignificance, worthlessness, and death—everything in us that harrows us, cuts us to the quick, and wounds us, but yet brings us to the Good Physician that He may exercise His healing art—all these are sowing for us a blessed harvest of light for which we must wait a little while. Be thankful, brothers and sisters, for painful inward experiences! When they are most severe, they are often most beneficial. Be grateful to God that thus, by His Spirit, He is making you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, and in one word is sowing gladness for the upright in heart! Thus I have, as well as I could, shown you the Sowers.

III. Now I shall occupy a few minutes by inviting you **TO GO TO THE FIELD**.

God has sown happiness for His saints, but you must remember it is only sown; you are not to expect to see it grown up while you live this side of the moon. Now where are the fields that we may well say are sown by God's grace with happiness for us? Here is one field—the field of His word. Ah, you may almost *see* the happiness here we say the pearl is hidden in this field, but really it gleams upon the very surface! Every promise of God has a secret meaning beyond what we as yet have learned, and that hidden sense is full of happiness for the children of God; every page here is intended to be for their comfort, for their lasting good, either in the form of instruction, rebuke, or edification. The whole book, as we pass from field to field, and, as it were, climb over one fence, and another, lies before us as so many broad and fertile acres—all sown with secret light for believers. So it is with providence. Every event

which can occur is sown with light for the faithful. It does not appear so; far rather the fields just now are very unpleasant to look upon. The water stands deep in those broad furrows; you cannot imagine there will ever be a harvest in a land so flooded with trouble, but wait awhile. Providence may look very dark today, but it is full of light—latent light, light which must flash forth as the noonday for brightness. All circumstances are teeming with benefit to you if you are in Christ; ships with black hulls are bringing you bright gold; ravens shall bring you meat, and even devils shall be slaves to your service. There is not a dying child or an ailing wife; there is not a dishonored bill; there is not a wrecked vessel; there is not a burnt house; there is not a single diseased bullock, but what you shall see at the last, and perhaps before then, to have been full of real blessing for you. There is not only mercy in God's dealings with His people in the gross, but in the *detail*. All the providence of God, far reaching as it is, and extending from our cradle to our tomb, is full of the divine intent that His children shall be blessed, and blessed they shall be! You have sometimes read, I daresay with wonder, that instance of Balaam trying to curse the people of God. He offered his seven bullocks, and his seven rams, and went first to one hill, and then to another, to look at them from different quarters, that he might be able to say a word against them. But every time that mouth of his was compelled to utter a *blessing!* And it is so with the great enemy of our souls; sometimes we are tried with poverty, and then he tries to curse us with envy. Then we are tried with wealth, and he would curse us with pride! But from whatever quarter of the compass he may endeavor to bring an imprecation upon God's people, the only result shall be their greater blessing, for "God is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said, and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" My beloved, the field of the

word, and the field of providence are both sown with light. There is one little field called, "God's Acre," which to some here present appears to be sown with much darkness, but is really sown with light—that sleeping place, the cemetery where your loved ones lie beneath the sod. Yes, but they shall rise again, and so light is sown for you, even in the moldering bones of your beloved children and friends. You would not have it otherwise, would you? Would you lose that seed? Imagine, for a moment, that it should never come up again from the sepulcher? Would not that grieve you beyond measure? It is your comfort to feel that these dry bones shall live, and all the band of those you loved so dearly, who have gone from you for a while, are not lost, but gone on ahead of you. "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy." And what a happy meeting! What joyous greetings, what blessed reunions when they meet to part no more! In that, "God's Acre," then, in the many burials we have attended, light is sown for the righteous!

Beloved, light is sown for the righteous, even upon earth; I mean there is a glory promised to the church of God even upon this earthly globe. Time shall speed its flight, and the day shall come of the Master's ultimate triumph; the millennial age is certainly foretold, and faithfully covenanted by the promise of God. Then the martyr's blood shall be rewarded; then the ashes of the saints shall prove to have been good seed-corn scattered to the winds, but vital in every atom. The day is coming when the monarchs of the earth shall yield their thrones to Jesus, and the gods that now reign over mankind shall be cast away as ignoble things to the moles and to the bats; then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the glory of their Father. What will be the bliss of a faithful servant of God at his Master's coming? It is not mine to give you fancy pictures,

but to remind you of those words of the Master, that if we have been faithful in few things, He will make us ruler over many things. We shall be on earth kings and priests unto our God, and shall reign with Him. In the very land of persecution, rebuke, slander, and of scorn, the righteous shall put on their crowns, and shall walk in white with their Lord, for they are worthy! Light is sown for the righteous.

But I must ask you now to look beyond your cemeteries, and to look beyond this poor narrow world. What is this earth but a mere speck? Look into eternity! Can your minds conceive it? Eternity! Duration without boundary! The whole of that boundless region is sown with light for you! Think of a prairie in America, a sea of grass; think of it all plowed and tilled, and sown with wheat, and all yours! How rich would you be? But what are the prairies compared with the plains of heaven? And what the finest corn compared with heaven's light? All far away through all the ages of ages—when this world has been consumed with fervent heat; when sun and moon have passed away like lamps blown out because the night is over, there shall still be an up-springing of never-ending blessedness for you! Eternity is sown with light for you! The Godhead shall be yours with all its infinity ministering to your delights. The Lord Himself shall be your portion; the God of Israel shall be your endless heritage! Brothers and sisters, what more can I say? We cannot possibly measure the great fields that are sown for us, so let us thank God, and take courage, and go on our way believing that we have fields already sown everywhere, and we must wait awhile before we shall reap the harvest.

IV. The last head is the **FUTURE**, but it shall occupy only a second or two, as I must close with a practical application.

The *future!* That is always in the farmer's eye when the teams go out to plow, and when the sower's baskets are filled with corn; he thinks of next July or August, and the "Harvest

Home," and the going to market with the yellow grain. So ought we always to have our eyes upon the future, having respect unto the recompense of the reward. Today is all sowing, but we do not know how soon the reaping will begin. "As the Lord lives," said one, "there is but a step between you and death." And it may be only a step to any of us, for the Lord may descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel, and the voice of God—and may at once begin to reap! But what a reaping! O my soul, what an eternal satisfaction to you to be forever with the Lord! One glimpse of His dear face on earth has ravished you, but what must it be forever without a veil between to gaze into that beloved countenance, and to feel His love shed abroad in your heart, and your heart plunged as into a sea of that love ineffable? Beloved, it is but a mere film of time that divides us from our expected portion. Those of us who are still young and in good health, should remember, and remember with great satisfaction, that if we are spared for 40 years, yet they are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. And while you who are getting gray and have reached your threescore years and ten, you may be glad that with you it can be but a few more revolving moons, the passing away of a few more Sabbaths and you shall be forever with the Lord! Come, come, and murmur not! If the inn is not as comfortable as flesh desires, you are not to tarry long in it, you are on your journey home, and the cry is, "Up and away!" What if the way is rough? Your face is turned *Zionward!* The road cannot be long, so smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song! You are not like those unhappy creatures, some of whom are present here, whose life has been a sowing of *darkness;* they have leagues of thistles to reap, acres upon acres of briers, and thorns of which they will have to make their bed forever; they have been sowing the wind, and they will have to reap the whirlwind which will carry their guilty souls forever

in its dreadful tornadoes. O you who have never had light sown for you because you have never sought mercy through Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit has never renewed your hearts, and made you righteous, think of what your fate will be! You will be like the farmer who sowed not in the seed-time, and therefore reaps not in the time of harvest. Naked, poor, miserable, destitute, and forsaken, you will begin harvest, but you shall have nothing! You will *then* ask God to have mercy upon you, but He will refuse you; you will clamor for the benefits of His divine grace, but they shall be denied you, for He will not hear you when once life is over. If we hear Him not today, neither will He hear us tomorrow! O for divine grace to have a seed-sowing here, that we may have a reaping forever and ever!

I shall close by observing that the doctrine of our text ought to be very, very comforting to all of us who are in Christ. Sufferer, your pains are sharp—bear them manfully, and repine not, for there is light springing up for you. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people who dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Poor man, working hard for a little, with many needs and sufferings, light is sown for you! You shall soon dwell in the city of the many mansions! You shall walk the golden streets of the pearly-gated city where poverty is banished forever! "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Slandered one, whose name is cast out as evil for Christ's sake; bear it with rejoicing, light is sown for you! Amidst the martyrs, and the throng of the chosen who suffered for righteousness' sake, you shall reap the sheaves of glory—reap them world without end! And you who have to suffer more than slander, who lose friend and home for Christ's sake, rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you; those

ancient witnesses have reaped the light, and *are* reaping it, and even so shall you when worlds shall pass away! May the Lord give us divine grace to forget the present, to rejoice in the future, and to count the reproach of Christ greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt! Amen and amen!

837 "ALL THESE THINGS" – GEN. 42:36; ISA. 38:16; ROM. 8:37

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Oct. 18th, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And Jacob their father said unto them, You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." — Genesis 42:36

"O Lord, by these things men live, And in all these things is the life of my spirit." — Isaiah 38:16

"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." — Romans 8:37

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Isaiah 54]

THE PATRIARCH must use the expression, **"ALL THESE THINGS."** He had gone through the catalog; there were but three items at the most, and yet nothing narrower than, "All these things are against me" will suit him. Our notation of our trials is very apt to present them in exaggerated number, but when we come to count our *mercies*, as a usual rule our tendency is to diminish them; we magnify the hosts of our troubles, and underestimate the armies of our benefits. It were well if it were not so, for the habit is most painful to ourselves, and dishonorable to God. *"All* these things," indeed! And what a

little "all" compared with the benefits of God! What an insignificant "all" compared with the sufferings of our covenant head! What a trifling "all" compared with the amazing weight of glory which shall soon be revealed in us! However, allowing the timorous expression to stand, it shall be my business this morning to show that while, according to the verdict of unbelief, "all these things are against us," yet there are other lights in which to look upon the multitude of our griefs—lights which shall enable us to perceive their benefit to us, and even to triumph in them through Him who loved us.

I. Our first text is **THE EXCLAMATION OF UNBELIEF**—*"All these things are against me."*

In Jacob's case it was a very plausible verdict; he had long lost sight of Joseph, Simeon did not return from the journey into Egypt; his sons now requested that Benjamin might be entrusted to their thriftless care, and it might well appear to the anxious father as if, one by one, his children were sinking into untimely graves, and that God was dealing severely with him; even the insinuation by which he ascribed these bereavements to the malice or carelessness of his sons, "You have bereaved me of my children," had an air of great likelihood thrown around it. Yet plausible as was the old man's mournful conclusion, it was not correct, and therefore let us learn to refrain from rash judgment, and never in any case conclude against the faithfulness of the Lord. There may be peculiarities in our case which look as if the Master had treated us with cruel harshness; there may be thorns of unusual sharpness in our pillow, but we must not dream that *anger* placed them there! We may be pining under a grief which we could not tell into another's ear; it may seem that our lot is singled out and separated for peculiar misery, and therefore it may seem just to conclude, "God has forsaken me; He has turned upon me in His fierce anger, and His loving-kindnesses have failed

forevermore." But rest assured, my brothers and sisters, that the most plausible is not always the truest, and the most natural is not the most sure. God is, and always must be love to His people. Let nothing disturb you in this belief. Believe not the clearest inferences from His providence—believe HIM! Let outward circumstances say what they may; even if your understanding should lead you to doubt the Lord, remember that God is greater than your understanding, that His ways are past finding out, and in the end His dispensations must prove to be wise, loving, and gracious. Yet I can well imagine that souls in distress feel it almost ungenerous to dispute the verdict at which they have arrived, for the *evidence* appears to be so multiplied and clear; sitting alone, silent in your sorrow, crushed out of all hope, you claim the unhappy right to declare, "All these things are against me." And yet, beloved, it is not so!

Jacob's exclamation was most evidently exaggerated—exaggerated in the term he used, *"All these things,"* for there were but three evils at the most—exaggerated, too, in most of his statements. He said, "Simeon is not." Now, his sons had told him that the ruler of the land of Egypt had taken Simeon, and bound him before their eyes; but they gave him no reason to believe that Simeon was put to death; the old man jumps to a conclusion for which he has no warrant, and laments because, *"Simeon is not."* He added, "You would take Benjamin away." Yes, but only to go into Egypt to buy corn—a short and needed journey from which he would soon return! You would suppose, from the patriarch's language, that beyond all doubt Simeon had fallen a victim in Egypt, and that Benjamin was demanded with a view to his instant execution! But where was *evidence* to support this assertion? We frequently talk of our sorrows in language larger than the truth warrants; we write ourselves down as peers in the realms of misery, whereas we do but bear the common burdens of ordinary men; we dream that no

others have ever passed along our rugged path, whereas the road is beaten down with the footsteps of the flock. We imagine that the furnace has been heated seven times hotter for us, whereas, compared with martyrs, and the afflicted in all ages, and especially compared with our Master, it is probable that our griefs are of the lighter kind.

The exclamation of Jacob was also as *bitter* as it was exaggerated, for it lead him to make a speech which (however accidentally true) with his information as to his sons was ungenerous, and even worse, he said, "You have bereaved me of my children." Now, if he really believed that Joseph was torn of beasts, as he appears to have believed, he had no right to assail the brothers with a charge of murder, for it was little else!

In the case of Simeon, the brothers were perfectly innocent—they had nothing whatever to do with Simeon's being bound; it was wrong to accuse them so harshly. In the taking away of Benjamin, though there may have been a jealousy against him as before against Joseph, yet most certainly the brothers were not to blame. They told their father, most correctly, the message which the lord of Egypt had sent to him. It was Joseph who had said, "If you bring not your younger brother with you, by the life of Pharaoh you shall not see my face again." That was no invention of theirs, and it was unjust on the part of the old patriarch to cast over his sons, who probably loved him very much, and were anxious for his welfare, an accusation little short of a charge of triple murder. "You have bereaved me of my children." Oh, cruel words! Brothers and sisters, when our griefs are heavy, we are apt to accuse our fellows, to be angry with the secondary causes of our suffering, and to say things which ought not to be said by the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus! A dog will bite the stick with which you strike him, but if he had sense, he would see how little the secondary cause has to do with it. And so we,

oftentimes, are provoked against the person through whom we are troubled, whereas, after all, the rod is wielded by the hand of God, and *He* is the true source of affliction! If you drink of the river of affliction near its outfall, it is brackish and offensive to the taste, but if you will trace it to its source, where it rises at the foot of the throne of God, you will find its waters to be sweet and health-giving. Even the waters of affliction, when they are tasted at the wellhead, are sweet with divine love, but if you follow them along the miry channels of secondary causes and instrumentalities, you will perceive bitterness in them creating envy, malice, and all uncharitableness within you. Jacob was, in the expression before us, even bitter towards God! There is not a word like submission in the sentence, nothing of resignation, nothing of confidence; he knew very well that all things came from God, and in effect he declares that God is, in all these things, fighting against him! God forbid that these tongues, which owe their power to *speak* to the great God, should ever pervert their powers to slandering Him! And yet if our tongues have not spoken unbelievingly, how often our *hearts* have done so; we have said, "Why has God dealt thus with me? Why are His strokes so multiplied? Why are my wounds so blue? Oh, why am I thus chastised? Why does He put cross upon cross upon my galled shoulders, and crush me into the dust with heaviness of sorrow?" Peace, child of God, peace! Your Father loves you—love Him in return, and let your love assure you that it is not possible for Him to measure out to you a drachma of sorrow more than is needed, nor a grain of bitterness more than your soul absolutely requires for its spiritual health! The exclamation of Jacob was sadly bitter, both towards God and man, but if it had not been for *unbelief,* it had never dishonored his lips.

Observe that this speech was rather *carnal than spiritual;* you see more of human affections than of divine grace-worked faith;

more of the calculator than the believer; more of Jacob than of Israel. Jacob is more the man, and less the man of God than we might have expected him to have been. See how he dwells upon his bereavements! "Joseph," that dear name, as it brought up the beloved Rachel before his mind, wrung the old man's heart. "Joseph is not." Alas, that wound was still bleeding! Then, "Simeon is not." The reckless, daring, valorous Simeon is fallen in the stranger's land! Then, worst of all, Benjamin, the dear name intertwined with the saddest of his funerals—the mother's "Benoni," and the father's, "Benjamin"—the last and dearest must be taken away. You see it is the father all through; the loving parent thinking only of his children; the *natural* affections predominating. You see nothing here of the grandeur of faith, nothing of the nobility of Job when he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Here we meet with no such question as that of the patriarch of Uz—"Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?" Jacob acts like a wayward child, vexed, and out of temper, crying against its father; he manifests a petulant spirit tempted by the natural promptings of the flesh to rebel against God. For a while the work of the Spirit was beclouded and eclipsed in that venerable man of God. And so, brothers and sisters, we also must set ourselves upon our watchtower, lest by any means we allow even the allowable affections of the flesh to overshadow our spirit, and dim the luster of the work of divine grace. Jesus wept, and therefore we may weep. Sorrow is licensed by the Redeemer's example. Our Lord was no stoic, and He would not have His people restrain natural emotions; we are bound to sorrow when we are afflicted and chastened of the Lord, but though Jesus wept, He did not *murmur;* though He sorrowed, yet He did not *repine.* There is a boundary beyond which our mourning must not pass. Jacob might well have said, "Joseph

is not; Simeon is a prisoner, and Benjamin is to be taken away from me. The cup is bitter, and if it is possible, O Lord, let it pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done." And then he might have burst into a flood of tears, and there would have been no sin in it at all, but much of sacred tenderness; but he went too far—his natural affections, instead of taking their proper place, usurped the place in which faith should have sat supreme he did not merely give his feelings vent, but mastery. He not only wept, but salted his tears with murmuring, and this was an evil thing.

Notice, dear brothers and sisters, in the case before us, the patriarch's unbelieving observation was *quite unwarranted by his past history*. He had been a man of troubles from his youth up; he fled from his father's house to be an exile; he laid himself down with a stone for his pillow and the hedges for his curtains, but with the angels for his watchers. And did he find the solitude of Luz, and the desolation of that lonely place to be against him? Ah, no! He dreamed that matchless dream in which a ladder was set between earth and heaven, and the covenant God appeared to him, and made a covenant with him, and sent him on his way rejoicing! Could Jacob think of Bethel, and say, "All these things are against me"? And when afterwards, more memorable still, he came back with his wives, and those very children over whom he now grieves, did not Jehovah preserve him? Could he forget Peniel, and the place where he wrestled and prevailed at the brook Jabbok? Could he forget an infuriated brother with a band of 400 men sworn to take his life, come to destroy him—a brother justly incensed, against whom Jacob had done a great wrong? Esau was then close upon him to strike the mother with the children—did Jacob then find that all things were against him? Did not Esau fall upon his neck and kiss him? Did not God deliver His servant? And so again, at Shechem, when the nations of the

land would have avenged the blood of the Shechemites who had been so treacherously slain by his sons, did not the Lord bade them touch not His anointed, and do His prophet no harm? And did not Jacob walk in safety among tribes thirsty for his blood? Thus, looking back upon the past, and remembering the covenant which God had made with him, it was not consistent that Jacob should speak as he did. It was more consistent with the past to have said, "Out of this difficulty I shall arise, for the Lord is with me." It was consistent with his past experience for him to have commanded his sons, "Whatever the Lord does, let us accept it at His hands, for He has not forsaken us in the past, neither will He desert us in days to come." *That* would have been faith! But oh, how often you and I forget the steps already trod—and all the mercies which attended them—and fear that God will forsake us, and become our enemy! The Ebenezers which we have raised, do they count for nothing? His love in times past, has that no argument in it for the present, and for the future? Will we not say with David, "Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice"? He has been with us in 10 troubles—can we not trust Him for the eleventh? We went through fire and water; men did ride over our heads, yet He brought us out into a wealthy place, and set our feet in a large room, and can we not rely upon Him, now that new difficulties obstruct our path? Yes, beloved, we will learn from the past, for the lesson of our experience is that the Lord has not forsaken them who trust Him, and they who wait upon Him shall never be ashamed or confused, world without end!

Still keeping to Jacob's exclamation, let me observe that it was altogether erroneous. Not a syllable that he spoke was absolutely true. "Joseph is not." And yet, poor Jacob, Joseph is! You think the beasts have devoured him, but he is ruler over

all the land of Egypt, and you shall kiss his cheeks before long. "Simeon is not." Wrong again, good father, for Simeon is alive, though for his good, to cool his hot and headlong spirit, Joseph has laid him by the heels a little. He had been much too furious in killing the Shechemites, and in other deeds of blood; Joseph knows this, and is doing his brother a service that may change his character through life by keeping him a little while in captivity; and as to Benjamin, whom you say they wish to take away—he is to go and see his brother, Joseph, who longs to embrace him, and will return him to you in peace. Not one of all these things is against you! Joseph is sent to Egypt to feed you in the famine, and to cherish you in your old age, so as to make your last days your best days, and to save the house of Israel, and in fact, all the nations of the earth, alive! As for Simeon, good comes out of that, and that is not against you; and as for Benjamin, he shall be preserved to you, and you, too, shall go down and dwell in the land and rejoice exceedingly. Everything is *for* you! Now, usually our unbelief is a great liar. Our best things are reckoned by unbelief to be our worst; God sends His mercies to us in black envelopes, and we sit down crying over their dismal covering, and dare not open the letter, and read the heavenly news written within! The Lord sends His *blessings* in rumbling *wagons*, and we are as frightened at the sound as almost to lose the choice contents! Well does the hymn put it—

> "You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
> The clouds you so much dread
> Are big with mercy, and shall break
> In blessings on your head."

Our best days have been those which we thought our worst; probably we are never so much in prosperity as when plunged

in adversity. No summer days contribute so much to the healthy growth of our souls as those sharp wintry nights which are so trying to us; we fear that we are being destroyed, and our inner life is at that moment being most effectually preserved. Oh, if we read them aright, all things are for us! We are a thousand fools in one to be quibbling at the divine dispensation, and saying, "All these things are against me." Jacob was wrong in every jot and tittle of what he said, and so usually are we.

Being wrong in judgment, the good old man was led to unwise acting *and speaking,* for he said, "My son shall not go down with you." He would not yield to his sons; he was determined that Benjamin should not leave him. Simeon he seemed content to leave in prison, although he ought to have sent his sons back in the hope of bringing their poor brother out of bondage, and he ought to have been willing to run the risk of losing Benjamin rather than to have all the rest of his family die of starvation, but the old man resolutely sets his face, and perhaps stamps his foot, and tells them, "No!" Never with his consent should Benjamin be trusted with them; and to this resolve he stands until they are nearly starving, and then he says, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." The unbelieving generally do stupid things. We conclude that God is against us, and then we act in such a way as to bring troubles upon ourselves which otherwise would not have come. To stand still and see the salvation of God is a grand position for a believing soul, but to run headlong, cloud or no cloud, guide or no guide—is to fall into the ditch, to lose ourselves in the dark woods, and to bring upon ourselves unnumbered ills. Let us take heed of unbelief, since it confuses the judgment, and dishonors God.

And notice, once more, that good old Jacob lived *to find, in actual experience, that he had been wrong from beginning to end!* We do not all live to see what fools we have been, but Jacob did; I

wonder, when the wagons came, and he was quite sure they came from *Joseph*, what he thought of that speech, "All these things are against me"? And when he came to Egypt, and Joseph came to meet him, and they fell upon each other's necks—I wonder whether it did not half choke him to think, "I once said, 'all these things are against me.'" When the old soul went tottering about the land of Goshen, leaning on his staff, with his mind full of all the glory of his darling Joseph; when he was enjoying a brilliant old age, at last; when he saw, day by day, how Joseph was honored, and how great he was, I think he must often have sought out a little corner to weep in, and to confess, "Lord, how wicked was I to say, 'All these things are against me,' when I have lived to see You dealing with me with a Father's tenderness, and with the wisdom and loving-kindness of a gracious God." If we are not in this world permitted to see the good results of all our troubles, at any rate we shall behold them in the next; and if such things as tears of joy will be allowed on the other side of the river, some of us will shed abundance of them! Oh, if regrets might mingle there, how we shall regret that we rashly anticipated the results of divine action, and were so unwise as to misinterpret the Master's mind! At any rate, we will string our harps to noble tunes, and this shall be the part of our celestial minstrelsy, "The Lord lives, and blessed be our Rock who out of much tribulation has brought His servants, and through their tribulation has helped them to obtain the victory, and to enter into their eternal rest." Thus much upon the exclamation of unbelief, for higher themes await us.

II. Turn now to the 38th chapter of Isaiah, and the 16th verse, where you have **THE PHILOSOPHY OF EXPERIENCE**.

"O Lord, by these things men live,
And in all these things is the life of my spirit."

Unbelief says, "All these things are against me." Enlightened experience says, "In all these things is the life of my spirit." The passage is taken from the prayer of Hezekiah after he was raised from his sick bed; he describes the bitterness of his soul in his chattering, like the crane or the swallow, but he comes to the conclusion that all these trials, and afflictions, and approaches to the gates of the grave made up the life of mortal men, and that by them the life of their spirit is served. Beloved, this is a great and instructive truth of God! Our spirits, under God, live by passing through the sorrows of the present, for first let me remind you that by these trials and afflictions we live because they are *medicinal;* there are spiritual diseases which would corrupt our spirit if not checked, kept down, and destroyed as to their reigning power by the daily cross which the Lord lays upon our shoulders. Just as the fever must be held in check by the bitter draught of quinine, so must the bitter cup of affliction rebuke our rising pride and worldliness; we would exalt ourselves above measure, and provoke the Lord to jealousy against us, were it not that trouble lays us low. None of us shall know, until we read our biography in the light of heaven, from what inbred sins, foul corruptions, damnable filth, and detestable lusts we have been delivered by being driven again and again along the fiery road of affliction; adversities are the sharp knives with which God cuts from us the deadly ulcers of our sins—these are the two-edged swords with which He slays our enemies, and His own which lurk within us. He must prune us, and trim us as the gardener his trees, otherwise we shall bring forth no fruit. Therefore by all these things which Jacob declared to be against him, we find the life of our spirit wisely protected.

Afflictions, again, are *stimulates;* we are all apt to grow slothful; I know not whether it is so with all believers, but we

of gross and bilious temperament find ourselves oppressed by the spirit of slumbering, but personal sickness, or relative grief, (which is sharper still), or serious pecuniary losses—these things stir our sluggish blood, and make our hearts beat at a healthier rate. There is an old story in the Greek annals of a soldier under Antigonus, who had a disease about him, an extremely painful one, likely to bring him soon to the grave. Always first in the ranks was this soldier, and in the hottest part of the fray, he was always to be seen leading the van; he was the bravest of the brave, because his pain prompted him to fight that he might forget it; he feared not death, because he knew that in any case he had not long to live. Antigonus, who greatly admired the valor of his soldier, finding out that he suffered from a disease, had him cured by one of the most eminent physicians of the day. But alas, from that moment the warrior was absent from the front of the battle! He now sought his ease, for, as he remarked to his companions, he had something worth living for—health, home, family, and other comforts—and he would not risk his life, now, as before. So when our troubles are many, we are made courageous in serving our God; we feel that we have nothing to live for in this world, and we are driven by hope of the *world to come* to exhibit zeal, self-denial, and industry, but how often is it otherwise in better times? Then the joys and pleasures of this world make it hard for us to remember the world to come, and we sink into inglorious ease. Master, we thank You for our griefs, for they have quickened us! We bless You for winds and waves, for these have driven us away from treacherous shores; before we were afflicted we went astray, but now have we kept Your word, by Your grace.

Trials and troubles touch the life of our spirit because their endurance is strengthening; they have the same effect upon the spiritual man as athletic exercises upon the wrestlers of old. If

men would win honor in the Greek games, they denied themselves all luxuries, and passed through severe ordeals by which their sinews and muscles were developed; and so the Lord puts His children through severe training, that He may develop their manhood, that their patience may learn to endure hardness, that their faith may learn steadfastness. Rough winds root the oaks, so our afflictions confirm us in the promises of God. We had been babes forever, and never have been able to walk alone, if the Lord had not put us on our feet, and allowed us to fall again and again—each time to rise stronger, acquiring the art of walking by our bruised and broken knees.

Our troubles are a great educational process; we are at school now, and are not yet fully instructed. What little we know, we scarcely know, and what we have learned is so little that we are, most of us, only in our A, B, Cs. Yet, we cannot read words of one syllable, and it is right that we should continue at school till we are made meet to enter into the loftier company beyond the stars. Now, who learns as well anywhere as on the sick bed, or in the midst of tribulation? I tell you, sirs, there are days in a man's life when he learns more in an hour than in 70 *years* of ease. I shall not give instances, but there have been such days for some of us of late, and may the Lord make us wiser thereby! Blessed is the man who is thus corrected and instructed—to whom the Master opens up the word, and the heart, and the promise by fire-light shed from the furnace. The rod is a great teacher. I do not know whether boys always need the rod to make them learn, but I am sure *men* do; and some of us have skin so thick that we need to be struck everyday. As David puts it, "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning," as if he never began the day without his whipping, and never passed through without a repetition of the scourging. We must take up our cross daily if we would be disciples of Jesus.

So, too, trials and tribulations are the life of our spirit, because they are preparative for that higher life in which the spirit shall truly live. Jacob would hardly have been fit for the luxury of Egypt, if he had not been trained by his griefs; that happy period before his death, in which he dwelt in perfect ease and peace, at the close of which, leaning upon his staff, he bore such a blessed testimony to the faithfulness of God, he would not have been fit to enjoy it—it would have been disastrous to him if he had not been prepared for it by the sorrows of Succoth. So we shall be made meet to be partakers in the inheritance in light by traversing the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land. This is the place for washing our robes—yonder is the place for wearing them! This is the place for tuning our harps, and discord is inevitable to that work—but yonder is the abode of unbroken harmony! We fret, and grieve, and vex ourselves today, but by-and-by we shall rest in unbroken happiness! Let us have courage! The end will more than repay us for the toil of the means, and the rest shall make up for the labor of the way. Be of good comfort, and instead, from now on, of concluding that outward trials are against you, agree with Hezekiah in this wise sentence, "By these things men live."

Let me only detain you one minute, to ask you whether in looking back upon your life, are you not compelled to feel that the best parts of your character have been produced in you by your troubles? Have not your noblest actions been worked by you in adversity? You had not been, today, what you are, nor where you are, nor on the road to heaven as you now are, if you had not been afflicted. How much we owe to the anvil and the hammer! Would you alter your trials, now, if you could? You would have arranged your lot very differently sometime ago—but would you *now?* Even at this distance, too short to get the full perspective, and to understand it thoroughly—

would you have your life changed? I know you say devoutly, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life; every dark and bending line has met in the center of immutable love." Well, then, if it has been so until now, do you think the Lord is about to change? Do you imagine that He gives His best first? Is it not always His rule to keep the best wine until the last? Oh, how it has cheered and comforted me of late to think that I have always found my God to be most good to me, and if possible—after many sharp trials, He seems to have been better! Of late He has seemed more kind and gracious to me than at the first—and so it shall be to the end; He cannot change; He cannot deny Himself! So let us sweep the furrows from our brow, and wipe the tears from our eyes! Jesus goes before us, and the Spirit is with us; all things shall *not* be against us, but in them all shall be the life of our spirit, and our lasting good shall be the outgrowth of all.

III. I close with my third text, and I think you may almost guess it; it tells of **THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH.**

Turn now to the 8th chapter of Romans, and the 37th verse. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." "All these things are against us." Very well, we could not conquer them if they were not against us—but they are the life of our spirit, and as Samson found honey in the lion, so we, though these things roar upon us, shall find food within them! Trials threaten our death, but they promote our life. I want you to be sure to notice the uniform expression, *"All these things are against us." "In all these things is the life of my spirit,"* and now, *"in all these things we are more than conquerors."* The list is just as comprehensive in the best text as in the worst. No, poor Jacob's, "All these things" only referred to three; but look at Paul's list: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—the list is longer, darker, blacker, fiercer, sterner, but still we triumph, "In all these things we are more than

conquerors." Observe then, that the believing Christian enjoys present triumph over all his troubles. It is not, "We *shall be* more than conquerors," but, "We *are*." "We are today." As afflictions come, we conquer them, and before they come we overcome them. Over anticipated trouble faith wins a glorious victory. She believes that when trial comes it shall work her good, and so the bitterness thereof is gone forever, swallowed up in victory. When the trial comes she meets it as a conquered enemy, and after it is over she looks upon it as what she did foreknow, for she counted it not a strange thing when the fiery trial overtook her. We are conquerors, brothers and sisters, at this very hour! We often talk of the crown which we are to wear, but we are kings and priests unto our God even *now!* He has crowned us with loving-kindness and tender mercies. We say, "One day, thank God, I shall be able to rejoice in these troubles," but Faith rejoices in them *now*. We rejoice in deep distress, leaning on all-sufficient grace. To come out of the furnace, and walk calmly is nothing, but to walk *in* the furnace with the Son of God, *this* is the miracle! To sing after you have left the bed of pain is nothing, but to sing God's highest praises *on* the bed of sickness is the music that glorifies Him—and by faith we mean to excel in it! It is no small thing to see the dearest one you have on earth struck before you, and yet to bless the Lord, and when adversity comes to still praise Him, and when sickness follows, still to let the note rise higher, and when death draws near, to lift the song yet more high, and be more exultant still. "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." I tell you, the praise God receives from His poor bereaved or sick children is much sweeter than anything which ascends from angels, from cherubim and seraphim! Who would not praise the Master when He generously scatters His daily favors? The devil found an opportunity for speaking against Job from that very thing; he said, "Does Job fear God for

nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him, and all that he has? But put forth now, Your hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." And God is so pleased with the praise He gets from His children when their bone and flesh are touched, that He said, "He is in your hand, only spare his life." What glorious music it was when Job said, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him"! It rolled up into Jehovah's ear with sweetness such as cherubim and seraphim never could have yielded; what a glorious conqueror Job was in the very midst of his worst griefs! It was not that he received twice as much as before—that was not the greatest triumph, the triumph was that *while in adversity* he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." May we have such faith as that, to be now, "in all these things more than conquerors."

What does Paul mean by saying that believers are more than conquerors? Is it not this that with the conqueror there is a time when his triumph is in jeopardy? But it is never so with the believer! He grasps the victory at once by an act of faith. No "ifs," "buts," "perhapses," for him! He is conqueror at once, for God is on his side; a conqueror, too, who wins by a battle, and suffers by the battle; he has to endure wounds, and toil, and faintness, but by all our troubles we are not sufferers but gainers. It is not merely the reward of the suffering which is good, but the suffering itself, works patience, and patience experience; brothers and sisters, if a wise Christian had his choice, he would not choose the silken joys of prosperity, and uninterrupted happiness, because such a thing is poverty! Our sufferings and griefs, and losses, and crosses bring with them inevitably, through divine grace, an abundant wealth! I hear some brethren rejoicing that perhaps the Lord will come, and therefore they will not die. I would sooner die, had I my choice; I see no comfort in the hope of *not* dying. "They who are alive,

and remain, shall not prevent them who are asleep." They shall not have preference over them who die, and indeed, it is written, "The dead in Christ shall rise *first*: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." So that some kind of *priority* is even allotted to the dead in Christ! If I die not I shall have lost what thousands will have who die, namely, actual *fellowship* with Christ in the grave. Let me have it, let me have it, my sweet Lord! Let me wear the clay-cold shape of death that once was Yours, and sleep within the sepulcher as You did! To die and rise again, and be with You forever is to complete the circle of the perfect! Those who think that to be alive when He comes will be so great a glory, will perhaps find it no such great thing compared with death and resurrection in the likeness of the Lord Jesus. As the warrior of the olden time dreaded peace, and longed for the garment rolled in blood, so may the believers rejoice in afflictions; as before the engagement the captain stimulates his soldiers by reminding them that, "the sterner the warfare the greater the honor," even so may we nerve our spirits. "Gentlemen in England now in bed will think themselves accursed that they were not here, and hold their valor cheap who went not with us on this glorious day"—so spoke the hero, and so let us also welcome persecution and tribulation! We would hold ourselves defrauded of honor if we avoided tribulation; we should look upon ourselves as being so far impoverished for eternity in being spared affliction upon earth. Up yonder to relate the triumphs of divine grace in us; to tell of the faithfulness of God in poverty and affliction; to make known to principalities and powers forever the wonderful and eternal love of God, as we have discovered it in the furnace and amidst the flames; this will be everlasting wealth for which we may be grateful now that God is putting us in the way of

gaining it, so that in these things we are more than conquerors, since to the conqueror it is a disadvantage to fight, but to us, even the fight itself is an advantage over and above the victory.

But see how this last text of mine opens up the great source of comfort. "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Did you notice Jacob said nothing about Him who loved us? No, he would not have been unbelieving if he had thought of Him; and the life of our spirit in trouble very much lies in remembering Him who loved us. It is through *Him* we conquer because *He* has conquered! I think I see Him at this instant wearing the crown of thorns, His hands still ruby with the marks of the nails, and His heart all opened with the spear, and He says to me, and to His servants, "Children, I am with you; you are filling up in your bodies that which is behind of My sufferings for My body's sake, which is the church. Be conformed to Me. Ask patience, and I will give it to you; ask the Spirit's help, and you shall receive it; and after you have suffered awhile you shall be with Me where I am, to behold My glory." Beloved, here is our joy indeed! Now the furnace grows cool, for He is at our side; the lake of trouble tossed with tempest becomes a sheet of glass, for He walks the billows, and we hear Him say, "It is I." The winds are hushed, and the coolest, softest zephyrs fan our cheeks while yet, again, He says, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you." "In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The Lord bless you, my tried brothers and sisters, in *all these things,* for His name's sake. Amen.

838 SINS OF OMISSION – JER. 11:8

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, October 25, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do; but they did them not." — Jeremiah 11:8

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Matthew 25]

JEREMIAH WAS commissioned of God to bring a solemn accusation against rebellious Israel, and he commences by solemnly mentioning their sins of omission. Observe that neglect of the divine command is the charge brought in the text. In the next verses, the prophet goes on to mention their sins of *commission*, but he very properly gives the first place to their shortcomings in positive service; he reminds them of what they had *not* done which they *ought* to have done, and how constantly and persistently they had refused to render active obedience to the righteous will of the Most High. Brothers and sisters, it is well for us to have our sins brought to our remembrance. This morning we may spend a little time most profitably by looking into the glass of Holy Scripture to discover the spots upon our countenances. Perhaps some of you whose sins have never been forgiven because you have never sought to have them pardoned, never having been sufficiently conscious of the

danger in which they placed you, may be by the Holy Spirit this morning convicted of sin, and led to Jesus! While I shall be trying to speak of your great omissions, perhaps conscience may be at work, and the Holy Spirit may work through conscience so that you may be led to repentance, and to faith, and through faith to salvation. "It is a consummation devoutly to be wished." Others here who have been pardoned, who rejoice every day in the perfect forgiveness which they have found at the foot of Christ's cross will, nevertheless, be benefited by being reminded of their sins, for thus they will be humbled; thus they will be led to prize more the great atoning sacrifice; thus they will be driven again to renew the simplicity of their faith as they look to Him on whom Jehovah made to meet the iniquities of all His people. God grant that also, for His name's sake.

I shall, this morning, take rather the *spirit* of the text than the words of it. The subject will be *sins of omission.*

I. First, I would call your attention to **THE GREAT COMMONNESS OF THESE**, to their commonness in the wide world, to their frequency in our own circle of society, and to each man, to each woman, I would say, to their abundance in your own heart.

Here it is observed at the outset *that in a certain sense, all offenses against the law of God come under the head of sins of omission*, for in every sin of commission there is an omission—an omission, at least, of that godly fear which would have prevented disobedience. Our Lord has told us that the whole law is summarized in these two commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself." Since, then, every sin must be a breach of this all-comprehensive law, every sin must, from a certain aspect, be a sin of omission. Consider, then, how multitudinous have been your omissions and mine! Have we loved the Lord our God

with all our heart? Perhaps you have omitted to love Him at all, and you who have loved Him, have omitted to love Him with "all your heart." And if at any time you *have* loved with "all your heart," yet you have omitted to *continue* in this. There have been slowing downs, and intermissions—and every omission of obedience becomes a distinct act of disobedience to the Most High. We have not served Him with "all our mind," any more than with all our heart; that is to say we have not yielded up our understanding to His infinite wisdom and authority. We have even dared to re-judge His judgments, and murmur against His providences; we have not surrendered our wills to His will, but have desired things contrary to His purpose, and to His truth. Neither has our strength been entirely devoted to His service. We have not done unto You, Creator and Preserver, at all according to the benefits which we have received! Take the first four commandments, which make up the first table, and what sins of omission have we all committed there! We have omitted to make God the chief, the first, the foremost, the only Lord of our spirit, and we have too often had other gods before Him; we have omitted to treat His name with the reverence which He demands, and if we have not committed profanity or blasphemy, yet that name has not always been hallowed by us as it should have been. As for His day, it has not always been sacredly guarded as a day of mental as well as bodily rest; we have done servile work in our minds, if not with our hands, by our many cares, and fretfulness, and so have failed to honor our God with the joyful worship which He deserves. Think, dear friends, especially you who know God, and rejoice in Him, how ill you have treated the Father of your spirits! He deserved, since He has bought you with the blood of His dear Son, to be served with an all-consuming earnestness; He rightly claims the cream of our thoughts, the best of our meditations, and that our souls should always be diligent in His service, but alas, we

have been sluggards and idlers! We have not spoken well of His name; we have not sounded abroad His glory; we have not been obedient to His will. We are unprofitable servants, for we have not done what it was our duty to have done towards our God.

The other portion of the law, our Savior tells us, is contained in these words, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Which of us has done *that?* We must plead guilty even before we come to details! Take the command as it stands, and there is no man of woman born who shall dare to say that he has been perfect in this. Especially let me remind you of those sins of omission which daily occur in our various relationships. We have oftentimes omitted to act lovingly towards our neighbor; we have failed to do the kind thing towards the sick, and the poor in relieving them, or the right thing towards the ignorant in seeking their instruction. I am afraid that many of us have the blood of our neighbors upon our garments, because we have left them in ignorance, and have not told them the gospel. And if they die in their sins they might well, with their dying breath, upbraid us who, having the light of God, have not carried it to them. You cannot, I think, look out of your window and say, "I am clear concerning all those who abide around me. I have, to the utmost of my ability, done for them what I shall wish to have done when I come to die." Brothers and sisters, have you not fallen into sins of omission against your own children? They have grown up now, some of them—did you for them, in matters towards God, do as you could wish, now that you are done? Or your little ones who are around about you—are you sure that you are always doing everything that God would have you do to train them up in His fear? Are there no omissions in the household? For my own part, I dare not think of my relationships towards this church, towards the world, towards other churches of Jesus Christ, towards my own household without the blush and the tear!

Beloved, our sins of omission are not to be numbered! Their number grows, as we examine ourselves, till they are more in number than the hairs of our head, and if we had to be justified by our own works, we dare not look up, but must bow our head as guilty culprits, and submit to the sentence of God.

Look at sins of omission in another light. How many there are who have omitted yet to perform the first and all essential gospel commands! Wherever the gospel goes, it cries, "Repent and be converted"; and yet again, "Repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"; and yet again, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Now, I will not speak of the neglect of baptism, though the mass of the church and the world have renounced baptism, and have adopted a ceremony of their own invention, but I *will* speak to you of the neglect of repentance, for many of you in this house have been urged, again and again, to repent and consider your iniquities, but you have refused the sacred counsel. There was, indeed, room enough for repentance, and cause enough for a change of mind—but, though you have heard the arguments for penitence, your heart still remains hard towards God, and no true sorrow for sin is found within your spirit. How often have these lips declared to you that faith in Jesus Christ is both your *duty,* and your *privilege;* that it alone can save you? Yet that faith you have neither sought nor desired! You know in *theory* what saving faith means; you could explain to others what it is to believe in Jesus, and yet you remain hearers of the word, and not *doers* of it, deceiving your own souls. Throughout this huge city of ours, dense masses of men know the gospel, but obey it not! They have heard it, or might hear it if they would, but they have not obeyed the gospel. As Isaiah says, it has been a hardening to them, and not a gracious means of renewal. O unbelievers the lack of faith is a sin of omission which will sink you to the lowest hell! This is the most damning sin of all, and

above all others fills the gates of hell—that men believe not on Jesus Christ, but love darkness rather than light!

Again, what sins of omission cluster round *religious duties!* A large proportion of our fellow citizens neglect altogether the outward worship of God. God forgive them, and send a change in the manners of the people by which the houses of prayer shall be thronged! Alas, it is not with these we need to deal with just now if we would find sins of neglect. Are there not with you, my hearers, even with *you*, sins against the Lord our God? What omissions we are guilty of as to prayer? How some live as if there were no God, or as if atheistic views had bewitched them; from morning to night multitudes forget the Most High, and call not on His name, and if, perhaps, they do remember to bow the knee in outward supplication, how few really *adore* their Maker? How lax in devotion are the most of us? How ready to be excused from communion with God? How short we make our prayers, and how little of our hearts do we throw into them? And that Bible, as it lies open before us, how, with silent but solemn eloquence, it accuses us! Can you look at it, my hearers, without shame? Unread is that book from day to day while the ephemeral *newspaper*—the mere record of the flying hour, and its trivialities is read with eagerness to the neglect of the great things of God's law! Truly, we cannot even look around upon the place where we assemble for worship without our omissions accusing us—for when we have been here, we have not set our thoughts upon God, we have not sung His praises with heart-music! When the time of prayer has come, our thoughts have been gadding here and there after vanity. Brothers and sisters, whatever part of religious worship comes under review, we must confess that we have left undone the things which we ought to have done! And so take the whole stretch of human life, from the cradle to gray old age! We failed to honor our parents in our youth; we have been slow in

honoring God throughout our manhood, and at the close of life the same omission in different forms may be charged upon us. God deserves of us that we should serve Him that we should, to the utmost of our abilities, contribute to the revenue of His glory. But our talents have been wrapped in a napkin; our service has been given to *self*—we have lived to please ourselves, or to win our fellow creatures' applause, while our blessed God has had only the dregs of our thoughts, the remnants of our time, the refuse of our actions.

The roll of our omissions is very long, and if it were read by a tender conscience, it would seem black with multiplied lamentations. Who among us, apart from the atonement, can endure the thought that God records all our failures of duty as well as our actual transgressions? Who, I say, could dare to look up if it were not for those streaming wounds of that blessed Son of God who has blotted out our iniquities, and washed away our scarlet stains? Our omissions frown upon us, and thunder at us; they lie upon the horizon of memory like masses of storm clouds accumulating for a horrible tempest! None of us dares turn our eyes in that direction until first we have seen the Lord's appointed propitiation, and found our rest in Him.

II. Brothers and sisters, I call you to a second thought—what is **THE CAUSE OF THIS EXCESSIVE MULTIPLICITY OF SINS OF OMISSION**?

Of course, my brethren, the great cause lies in our *evil hearts*. That we do not bring forth fruit unto God is because our depraved nature is barren towards Him. Man is, by nature, dead in sin; and how can the dead in sin perform actions which express spiritual life? Can we expect to gather grapes or figs from withered trees? "You must be born-again," and until this inward change, this thorough *regeneration* of our nature has been accomplished, we remain barren, and unprofitable, and unaccepted of God. Lack of the new nature is the great root of

the matter in the ungodly; and the absence of a new heart and a right spirit mean men will never obey the Lord's commands till the Holy Spirit takes away the heart of stone, and gives them a heart of flesh. May the Lord do that for you, O you unsaved ones, and His shall be the praise! I suspect that the unnoticed superabundance of sins of omission may result, also, from the fact that the conscience of man is not well alive to sins of omission. If any of you had committed theft, he would most likely feel much ashamed; if another had fallen into an act of unchastity, it would probably stick in his conscience for a while, unless, indeed, habit had rendered him callous to it! But while conscience will chastise most men for direct acts of wrong, it is not in every case sufficiently alive to rebuke us for so much as one in 10 of our *omissions,* and, indeed, even our *memory* willfully refuses to file the record of duties left undone. Yet, beloved, there is as much sin in not loving God as in lusting after evil! There is as much rebellion in not obeying God as in breaking His commands. Measure for measure—put into the scales together, it may even happen that a sin of omission may turn out to be more sinful than one of commission! A sin of omission argues a state of mind sinful and corrupt, while a sin of commission may only be occasioned by the violence of a temptation while after all, the soul is at heart, right with God. Those sins of ours which we have never confessed or noticed, which have slipped away with the hours, and have gone as a dream, are recorded in the book of God, and in the day when unforgiven sinners with awakened consciences shall be made to hear that book read out before an assembled universe, woe unto them, woe unto them, that they refused to be obedient to the Lord!

No doubt, sins of omission are also multiplied through laziness. Some men have not enough force of character in them to be downright wicked; they are mere chips in the porridge

with nothing of manhood in them; they are so idle that they are not even good enough to be diligent servants of *Satan!* There are some who would, if they could, I think, lie in bed and rot of slothfulness, to whom it would be their most supreme bliss to have nothing to do forever, and nothing to think of except maybe a little eating, and drinking by way of variety. Because this laziness abounds, many men sleep on, and awake not to righteousness and to the service of God. For them to repent is troublesome; to believe in Jesus Christ requires the exercise of thought; to be a Christian is too laborious; to watch their conduct and conversation is too much to require of them! If heaven could be reached in a sound sleep, and sleeping cars could be run all the way to the Celestial City, they would be among the best of pilgrims, but they cannot rub their eyes even to see Jesus, or leave their couch to win heaven itself! How these simpletons will wake up one day when they find that their life of trifling has brought them within the fast *closed* gates of hell! God is not to be trifled with! He does not make immortal beings that they may sport like butterflies from flower to flower; He does not create souls, and give them lives to spend in child's play, fashionable frivolities, and killing of time! Yet in the face of eternity, life, death, heaven, and hell, multitudes upon multitudes are ruined simply because they neglect the great salvation and are absolutely too idle to concern themselves about eternal matters. They *doze* into damnation! They *sleep* into eternal fire! But what a waking! O my fellow men and women, run not the risk, run not the risk!

Ignorance, too, is a more excusable, and, perhaps, less fruitful cause of sins of omission, but still a prominent one. Some men neglect to serve God because they do not know His word, His mind, or His gospel. But with many the ignorance is willful. In every land the subject is supposed to know the law—and though our magistrates very rightly are often lenient to

prisoners who commit the first offense against a new law, yet such leniency lasts only for a case or two. And if after the law has been made for years, a prisoner pleaded that he did not know a law, he would be told that he ought to have known it. Especially is this the case with us who have the law here in the Bible, and who have it moreover written upon our consciences, so that when we sin, we sin not as the heathen do, but sin against the light of God, and knowledge. If a man sins through ignorance, he is so far excusable as the ignorance is excusable, but no further. And in this country, an ignorance of Christ, an ignorance of gospel duties, an ignorance of the law of God is without excuse, since in almost every street Jesus Christ is preached, and the word of God is within every man's reach! If he is but willing and desirous to know the mind of God, he may soon discover it. Yet, I doubt not, ignorance in many, many cases—willing, witting ignorance—does cause many sins of omission.

Sins of omission, again, are very plentiful because men excuse themselves so readily about them by the pretense of a more convenient season. "I have not repented," says one, "but then I mean to do so; I have not believed, but I shall do so before long; it is true I neglected prayer today, but then I intend, by-and-by, to give myself to supplication." So that men imagine that God is to be served by them at their own times and seasons! *God* is to wait until it pleases *them* to do His bidding, and when they have a more convenient season, *then* will they listen to His word, and to His Spirit! Ah, but, sirs, the excuse of some future improvement is pitiful—it holds no water, for we are always bound to serve God at once, and the postponement of service is the perpetuation of *rebellion*.

Many neglectors of God's will excuse themselves by the prevalence of the like conduct. To omit to love and serve the Lord is the custom of the *majority;* wherever custom endorses a

good thing, then it becomes unfashionable as well as sinful to break through the rule—and there are thousands of people who would sooner be wicked than be unfashionable! But when a right thing is not commonly observed in society, men straightaway begin to think that it is not necessary, and so they leave it undone; as if a prisoner brought before the bench should say, "It is true I am a thief, but then all the people in the court where I live are thieves, too; therefore I ought not to be punished. It is true, sir, that I could not keep my hands from picking and stealing, but then none of my family ever could; they were brought up to it, and you would not have a man forsake the customs of his father and mother, would you? My father and mother were professional thieves, and therefore I cannot be blamed for following their example." But enlightened conscience warns us that custom is no excuse for sin. To your own Master each one of you will stand or fall! And, sirs, however graceless may be the parish in which you live, you have not to account for the parish, but for *yourselves!* And however covetous may be the times in which your lot is cast, you are not accountable for the times, but for *yourselves!* I charge you, in the name of God, let not custom ever be an excuse to your soul for sin, for custom will be no plea at the bar of God, nor will the multitude of those who are lost be any alleviation to your pain when you, too, are cast away with them into outer darkness!

Need I multiply reasons for the commonness of sins of omission? They grow on every plot of wasteland in our hearts, and their seeds are carried everywhere, as the down of the thistle, and as many as the seed of the poppy.

III. I come now, in the third place, to say a few words by way of setting forth **THE SINFULNESS OF SINS OF OMISSION**.

I wish I had the power to speak upon this subject as I would, for I long to see broken hearts among us convinced of

their innumerable shortcomings. Broken hearts are God's sacrifices; there are some among us who complain that they cannot believe in Jesus because they do not *feel* their need. I only wish they might be made to feel their need while, this morning, they are reminded of what they have left undone. Now I pray the Holy Spirit to make you feel the guilt of omissions as they are seen in the following light.

Consider for a moment what would be the consequences if God were to omit, for one minute, to supply you with breath; if the Lord should omit, for a *second*, to supply you with life! Suppose the infinite God should omit His long-suffering mercy for an hour! Suppose He should refuse for an hour to restrain the axe of judgment—where would you be then? Suppose that the great preserver of all should make but one day's intermission of goodness in His dealings with the universe? The sun would not shine; the air would fail to fill the lungs; and life would forget to be! The world would cease to exist, and the whole universe would subside into the nothingness from which it sprang! One moment's forgetfulness on God's part would be annihilation to all His creatures! Suppose that Jesus had left an omission in the plan of salvation? If only one part of our salvation had been left unfinished, then all must be forever accursed; then must you put your hands upon your loins, this morning, and go up and down through this hopeless world in desperate sorrow, saying one to the other, "There is no hope! Salvation is unfinished, and consequently unavailable! The Savior omitted one necessary item, and none of us can, therefore, be saved!" If you will digest these two thoughts, you may, perhaps, taste the blessedness which lies in neglect of necessary things.

Omissions cannot be trivial, if we only reflect what an influence they would have upon an ordinary commonwealth if they were perpetrated there as they are in God's

commonwealth. Think a minute—if one person has a right to omit his duty, another has, and all have; then the watchman would omit to guard the house; the policeman would omit to arrest the thief; the judge would omit to sentence the offender; the sheriff would omit to punish the culprit; the government would omit to carry out its laws. Then every occupation would cease, and the world die of stagnation. The merchant would omit to attend to his calling; the farmer would omit to plow his land! Where would the commonwealth be? The kingdom would be out of joint. The machine would break down, for no cog of the wheels would act upon its fellow. How would societies of men exist at all? And surely, if this is not to be tolerated in a society of *men*, much less in that great commonwealth of which God is the King—in which angels and glorified spirits are the peers, and all creatures citizens! How can the Lord tolerate that here there should be an omission, and there an omission, in defiance of His authority? As the judge of all the earth, He must bring down His strong right hand upon these omissions, and crush out forever the spirit that would thus revolt against His will.

Think for a minute of how you would judge omissions towards yourselves; you have said to yourself, "As long as I do not drink or swear, or curse, or lie, or steal, it is a small matter that I neglect to be devout towards God." Now listen. There is your servant—he has never stolen your goods, he has never set your house on fire, he has never held a pistol to your ear, and yet you have discharged him. Why? "Why," you say, "because the fellow neglects everything about the house! I do not find that any command which I give him is carried out. *He* must be master, or *I* must—and if he will not do what I tell him, of what service is he? Let him go his way." That is how you judge your servant, is it? And is God to let *you* neglect His service, and yet to allow you to go unpunished? Take a soldier in the army. To

commit an act of mutiny, it is not necessary for the soldier to fix his bayonet, and kill his colonel; when he is ordered out on guard, he can just stay at home, or when the battle rages, he may, if he chooses, just ground his arms, and say, "No, I am not going out to fight." Who could tolerate such mutiny—how could it be allowed? The omission is as vicious as the commission! Your child, the other day, smarted beneath the rod, and why? He had not lied or pilfered; there was no direct vicious act, but you had told him to go on an errand, and he had refused to go. And when you told him again and again, (and remember, God has commanded you a great many more times than you ever told your child), there he stood in stolid obstinacy, and would not move; and then, very rightly he was made to feel that such things could not be permitted in your household. Now, if in our house we cannot tolerate this from a child, much more shall the Great Father not endure these obstinate omissions from us! "Ah, but," you say, "I have not omitted towards God to go to church or to meeting regularly; I have not omitted the form of singing and prayer, and so on; all I have omitted is the *spiritual* matter, I have not loved Him." And suppose, dear friends, suppose you have a wife, and the only thing that she has omitted is that she has omitted to love you—what would you think of that? Well, the house and domestic arrangements may show great cleanliness and order, but she is no wife to you if she has no love for you! The omission of love *you* feel to be a fatal one! And so that absence of love to *God* is such a dreadful absence, too! It is such a taking away of everything, that I only wish you could feel, you who have not loved Him, how guilty you are!

It may also help us, if we will consider for a moment what God thinks of omissions. Saul was ordered to kill the Amalekites, and not to let one escape, but he saved Agag and the best of the cattle, and for that, though he had positively

done nothing but simply stayed his hand, and refused to do so, the Lord said, "I have put you away from being King over Israel." Ahab was commanded to kill and slay Benhadad on account of innumerable cruelties; Benhadad was taken captive, but Ahab treated him with great leniency—and the result was, "Because you have let this man go, therefore your life shall be for his life." Non-obedience ruined Ahab. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the gentlest of all men, and yet there was one miracle which He performed which had a degree of vengeance in it—and what was that? He stood by a fig tree, and saw leaves but no fruit, and He said, "Henceforth there shall be no fruit on you forever," as if to show that fruitless things provoked His anger—not so much brambles which bear their thorns, but *fig trees* which ought to bear figs, and do not. Remember, too, the parable which we read this morning in your hearing. The man with the one talent was condemned, if you remember, and his condemnation was for this—not that he had squandered his lord's money, but that he had not *increased* it; so that, in God's opinion, the *not doing* of good is sufficient to condemn men even if they have not committed positive evil. When the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, what is the special sin which He reveals? The sin of adultery? The sin of robbery? No, of an omission. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." Omitting to believe in Jesus is the master sin of which the Holy Spirit convicts the world! Remember that solemn question of Paul when he asks, "How shall we escape if we—what? If we *swear?* If we frequent the tavern? No—"if we neglect so great a salvation?" The life-long neglect of God's salvation involves us in danger from which there is no escape!

IV. Much more might be said, but time fails me, and therefore let me remind you very solemnly of what will be **THE RESULT AND PUNISHMENT OF SINS OF OMISSION**.

Sins of omission will *condemn* us! Take the parable with which we closed our reading this morning—the king said to those on His left hand, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink." He did not say to them, "You were frequenters of evil houses; you were common drunkards; you were dishonest; you were fraudulent bankrupts; you were neglectors of the Sabbath, you were common profane swearers." No, but He said, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat." It was the *absence of virtue*, rather than the presence of vice, which condemned them! "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." "But, Lord, the man has no vice about him; he has not plunged himself into the kennel of open iniquity." "Ah, but that suffices not! If there are not the positive *fruits* of the Spirit producing in him holiness of life, he shall not see the Lord." O sirs, let none of us deceive ourselves! God will not accept our profession of religion because it simply keeps us chaste and polite, and makes us civil to our neighbors; we must have worked in us, by the Holy Spirit, a righteousness *better* than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or we shall by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven! There must be worked in us as a work of divine grace—a deep abhorrence of sin, an earnest clinging to purity, a resolute pursuit of everything that is peaceful, and lovely, and of good repute, or else let us prate as we may, we shall have no inheritance in the kingdom of God! I preach not salvation by works in any sense or degree, or shape, or form, but salvation by grace alone! Yet still I hear in my ears the echo of the Baptist's words, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Not only the tree that brings forth *bad fruit* is burned, but the tree which is *barren* and unprofitable is hewn down, and cast into the fire! If we bring

not forth the fruits of true saving faith, we may be sure that such faith is not in our possession!

Sins of omission not only bring condemnation, but if persevered in, they effectually shut against us the possibilities of *pardon*. I mean that sins of omission against the gospel deprive us of gospel privileges. "He who believes not"—is there pardon for him? "He who believes not"—is there rescue for him? No! He "is condemned already, because he has not believed on the Son of God." He that repents not—will divine grace reach him? Will the mercy of God blot out sins that are unrepented of? No, not so! As long as we cling to sin, sin will cling to us as the leprosy did to the house of Gehazi. God forgives all sins through Jesus Christ, and He is willing to forgive the vilest of us if we come to Him trusting alone in Jesus; but if we have not faith in Jesus Christ, it is not possible for us to receive from the Lord the forgiveness of sins which He promises only to those who believe in Jesus! In the marriage feast of which we read in the gospels, there were many who would not come, and they perished because they would not come; they are not charged with having actually committed anything wrong, but they perished for *not coming*. There was one who came to the feast, but he had not on a wedding garment; I do not read that he had put on rags, or had decorated himself with anything offensive to the master of the house—but he had failed to put on the wedding garment, and that was the deadly sin. And what was the sentence? "Bind him hand and foot, and deliver him to the tormentors." So I could not charge some of you, today, with anything outwardly contrary to morality, but, O sirs, if you have not—mark this, if you have *not put on the righteousness of Jesus Christ* by a living faith in Him, the tormentors must have you at the last! O that this truth of God might sink into your ears, and into your hearts! There is pardon for all omission to be found in the flowing wounds of Jesus! There is

life in a LOOK at Him! Over the heads of these multiplied shortcomings, God's mercy will come to all believers. So, remain not in your unbelief! May the Holy Spirit, by His own mighty power give you grace now to repent, and to believe—and *yours* shall be the salvation, and *God's* the glory, world without end! Amen.

839 THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH – COL. 1:18

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, November 1, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"He is the head of the body, the church." — Colossians 1:18

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Colossians 1]

AS IF TO SHOW US that this title of "Head of the church" is to be held in highest esteem, it is here placed in connection with the loftiest honors of our Lord Jesus; in the same breath the Son of God is styled "the image of the invisible God," "the first-born of every creature," "the Creator of all existence," and then, "the head of the body, the church." We dare not, therefore, think lightly of this title, nor do we hesitate to assert that any levity with regard to it would be as disgraceful as the profane use of any other name of our divine Lord. For any *mortal* to assume it to himself, we conceive would be equal in blasphemy to the assumption of the mediatorial office—and we should be no more shocked to hear a man claim to be "the Creator of all things," than we are now when a *mortal* is designated, "Head of the church."

What is the church? The word signifies an assembly; the church of Jesus Christ is an assembly of faithful men, the whole company of God's chosen, His called out ones, the entire community of true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever true believers are, there is a part of the church;

wherever such men are not, whatever organization may be in existence, there is no church of Jesus Christ. The church is no corporation of priests or confederacy of unconverted men—it is the assembly of those whose names are written in heaven; any assembly of faithful men is a church. The aggregate of all these assemblies of faithful men make up the one church which Jesus Christ has redeemed with His most precious blood, and of which HE is the sole and *only* Head. Part of that church is in heaven, triumphant; part on earth, militant, but these differences of place make no division as to real *unity*. There is but one church above, beneath; time creates no separation—the church is always one; one church of the apostles, one church of the reformers, one church of the first century, one church of the latter days, and of this one and only church, *Jesus Christ* is the one only Head.

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY OUR LORD'S HEADSHIP OF THE CHURCH?

That shall be very briefly our first subject of thought. We understand this headship to be the representation of the church as a body; we speak of counting heads, meaning thereby *persons*—the head represents the whole body. God has been pleased to deal with mankind as a community, and His great covenant transactions have been with men in a body—not with separate individuals. That is to say, at the first creation, God did not so much deal with each particular person of the human race as with the whole race represented in one man, namely, the first Adam. It was so ordained that the race should be bound up in his loins, to stand if he stood, to fall if he fell; therefore, my brothers and sisters, the fall, hence original sin, and hence the sorrows of this life. In order for salvation, which, perhaps, was only possible because we did not fall *singly* (for the devils falling singly and separately are reserved without hope of mercy unto everlasting fire), God instituted a *second* federation,

of which Jesus Christ is the Head. The apostle calls Him the Second Adam; He is the Head of that company of mankind who are His chosen— His redeemed who are known in this world by being led to believe in Him, and are ultimately gathered into His rest. Now, Jesus Christ stands to His church in the same position as Adam stood to his posterity. They are chosen in Him, accepted in Him, and preserved in Him— "Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." As His own words declare it, "Because I live, you shall live also." In the following chapters of the epistle before us, the apostle shows that the saints are buried with Jesus, risen with Him, and quickened with Him. Even more explicit is he in the fifth chapter of Romans, where the headship of Adam and of Jesus are compared and contrasted.

Our Lord is Head in a *mystical* sense, explained in Colossians 2:19: "The Head, from which all the body, by joints and hands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God." The head is to the body indispensable to life; it is the seat of mental life, the temple of the soul; even so Jesus Christ is the vitalizing Head of all His people. "He is our life." "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The life of every member of the mystical body depends upon the life of the mystical Head. Through Jesus Christ every living child of God derives his spiritual life; not one true member of the church lives by a life of his own. "For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Separation from Christ is spiritual death, "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." The head mystically is not merely the *source* of life, and the seat of sensation, but it is the throne of supreme government; it is from the brain that the mandate is issued which uplifts the hand, or bids it fall by the side. Man walks or speaks, or sleeps, or rises from his couch according to the dictate of that mysterious

royal something which finds a place for itself within the head. Thus in the true church of God, Jesus Christ is the great directing Head; from Him the only binding commands go forth; *to* Him all the really spiritual yield a cheerful homage; his members delight to do the will of their Head. The whole fabric of the church, actuated by His life, and being filled with His Spirit, most readily concedes to Him that in all things He shall have the preeminence. In proportion as Christians are truly united to Jesus, they are perfectly governed by Him, and it is only because of the old nature which abides in separation from Christ that believers offend and transgress. In so far as they are *spiritual* men, so far does Jesus rule them as the Head governs all the members of the body. The Head is also the glory of the body; there the chief beauty of manhood dwells. The divine image is best seen in the countenance—the face is the distinguishing glory of man. Man holds his head erect—his countenance is not turned towards the earth like the beast, it glows with intelligence; it is the index of an immortal mind. Beauty chooses as her favored seat the features of the countenance; majesty and tenderness, wisdom and love, courage and compassion here hang out their ensigns, but all the graces choose the head as their favored dwelling place. In this sense, right well is our Lord saluted as the "Head." He is fairer than the children of men; divine grace is poured into His lips. In Jesus Christ all the beauty of the church is summed up. What were His church without Him? A carcass—a ghastly corpse bereft of all its glory—because divided from its Head. What were all the good, and great, and excellent men who have ever lived without Christ? So many ciphers upon a writing table; they count for nothing until their Lord, as the great Unit, is put before them to give them power and value! Then, indeed, they swell to a mighty sum, but without Him, they are less than nothing and vanity! An uncomely thing would be the church of

God if she were not comely with the comeliness which Jesus imparts to her! His head is as the finest gold; His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars; He is the chief among 10,000, and the altogether lovely—glorious is that body of which He is the crown and excellence! Well may the church be called the fairest among women when her Head thus excels all the beauties of earth and heaven!

Another figure which is used to describe the headship of Christ to the church is the conjugal. As the Lord made Eve out of the flesh of Adam, so has He taken the church out of the side of Christ Jesus, and she is of Him as Eve was of Adam—she is of His flesh, and of His bones. A mysterious union has been established between Christ and His church which is constantly compared to that of marriage: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." Jesus is the bridegroom—His church is His bride. They are espoused, one to another; in bonds of love they are bound forever to each other, and they are alike with sacred expectation waiting for the marriage day when shall be accomplished the eternal purpose of God, and the desire of the Redeemer. As the husband exercises a headship in the house—not at all (when the relationship is rightly carried out) tyrannical or magisterial, but a government founded upon the rule of nature, and endorsed by the consent of *love*—even so Jesus Christ rules in His church. Not as a despotic lord, compelling and constraining His subject bride against her will, but as a husband well-beloved, obtaining obedience voluntarily from the heart of the beloved one, being in all things so admired, and held in esteem as to win an undisputed preeminence! Such conjugal headship is illustrated by the word of God in the old prophecy, "You shall call Me Ishi, and shall call Me no more Baali." Baali and Ishi both mean *lord*, but the *sense* differs—the one is a mere ruler, the other a

beloved husband. Jesus Christ's kingdom is no tyranny! His scepter is not made of iron; He rules not with blows, and curses, and threats, but His scepter is of silver, and His rule is love. The only chains He uses are the chains of His constraining grace; His dominion is *spiritual,* and extends over willing hearts who delight to bow before Him, and to give Him the honor due unto His name. These, I think, are the senses in which this word, "headship," is used. But there remains one other, these former all qualifying this last, upon which I intend to dwell at some length this morning.

Christ is the Head of His church as *King in Zion;* in the midst of the church of God the supreme government is vested in the person of Christ. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." The church is the kingdom of God among men. It is purely spiritual—comprehending only spiritual men, and existing only for spiritual objectives. And who is its King? None but Jesus! We can truly say, as they did of old who proclaimed the kingship of the Crucified, "We have another King, one Jesus." To Him the assemblies of the saints pay all regal honors, and at His throne the entire church bows itself, saluting Him as Master and Lord. To no other do we render spiritual obeisance; Christ only, and solely is King upon Zion's hill, set there by eternal decree, maintained in that position by infinite power, and appointed to remain upon the throne till every enemy shall be made His footstool. I wish I had eloquence, this morning that I might bear worthy witness to the crown-rights of King Jesus in His church! I know no subject which is more necessary to insist upon in these eventful times. Let Jesus be acknowledged as the *only* Head of the church, and the way out of the present political debate which agitates our nation is clear enough. Ignorance of this truth of God blinds many! It makes them labor with all their heart for a bad cause, under the notion that they are doing God service.

To know this truth is to hold a most weighty trust with which we must not trifle. Martyrs have bled for this truth! Scotland's heather has been stained in 10,000 places, and her waters have been dyed crimson for the defense of this weighty doctrine. Let us not be slow with unshaken courage to declare, yet again, that kings, and princes, and parliaments have no lawful jurisdiction over the church of Jesus Christ, and that the best of monarchs have no right to claim those royal prerogatives which God has given to His only-begotten Son! Jesus alone is the Head of His spiritual kingdom, the church! And all others who come within her pale to exercise power are but usurpers and Antichrist—and not for one moment to be respected in their usurped authority by the true church of the living God! Some churches have not learned this lesson, but are held in leash like dogs by their masters; they crouch down at the feet of the state to eat the crumbs which fall from Mammon's table; and if they are cuffed and beaten by the powers that be, well do they deserve it—and I would almost pray that the whip may fall upon them yet more heavily till they learn to appreciate liberty, and are willing to take off the dog collar of the state, and be free from human domination! If they lose a little wealth, they will win the solid gold of God's own favor, and the abiding power of His Spirit, which they cannot expect to have while they are traitors to King Jesus, and acknowledge not the sole and only headship of Immanuel in the church.

II. We shall now, therefore, in the second place, come to look a little into this headship of Jesus Christ in a *regal* sense, as to **WHAT IT IMPLIES**.

Since Christ is the Head of His body, the church, He alone can determine doctrines for her. Nothing is to be received as divinely warranted except it comes with His stamp upon it. It is nothing, my brothers and sisters, to the faithful servant of Jesus Christ that a certain dogma comes down to him with the

gray antiquity of the ages to make it venerable. Like a sensible man, the Christian respects antiquity, but like a loyal subject of his King, he does not so *bow* before antiquity as to let it become ruler in Zion instead of the living Christ! A multitude of good men may meet together, and they may, in their judgment, propound a dogma, and assert it to be *essential* and *undoubted;* and they may even threaten perils most abundant to those who receive not their verdict; but if the dogma was not authorized long before they decided it—if it were not written in the *Bible*—the decision of the learned council amounts to nothing! All the fathers, and doctors, and divines, and confessors put together cannot add a word to the faith once delivered unto the saints! Yes, I venture to say that the unanimous assent of all the saints in heaven and earth would not suffice to make a *single* doctrine binding upon conscience unless Jesus had so determined! In vain do men say, "So did the early church"—the early church has no supremacy over us! It is to no purpose to quote Origen or Augustine! Quote the inspired apostles, and the doctrine is established, but not otherwise! In the church of God it is never sufficient to say, "So thinks Martin Luther." Who was Martin Luther? A servant of Jesus Christ, and nothing more! It is not sufficient to say, "So teaches John Calvin," for who is John Calvin? Has he shed his blood for you, or is he your master? His opinion is to be *respected* as the opinion of your fellow servant, but in no respect as a doctor or authoritative teacher in the church—for Christ *alone* is Rabbi, and we are to call no man Master upon earth! Suppose I have received a truth of God from the very man who was the means of my conversion? I am bound, in candor and affection, to give all respect to him because of the relationship which exists between us, but I must take heed lest this declines into *idolatry*, and I become nothing more than a receiver of the truth of God as the word of *man*, instead of accepting it as the word of *God*. I am, therefore, in

the most candid manner, but none the less thoughtful, to bring to the test every truth of God which I have received—whether from my father, or mother, or my minister, or from some great man of olden times whose name I have learned to respect—seeking all the while the light of God from above to direct me aright. *Nothing* is doctrine to the church of God—nothing which has not been taught in the *Scriptures*. To Christians it is nothing to say that certain doctrines are taught in books of common prayer, or of conference discipline, or of systematic theology; to us it is of small account that either Presbytery, or the Episcopacy, or Independency have put their stamp upon a certain form of teaching. Authority is no more to us than the snap of a man's finger unless the truth thus commended derives *certainty* from the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Head of His body the church!

So next, since He is the Head, He only can legislate as to the church. In a state, if any knot of persons should profess to make laws for the kingdom, they would be laughed at! And if they should for a moment attempt to enforce their own rules and regulations in defiance of the laws of the country, they would be subject to punishment. Now the church of God has no power whatever to make laws for *herself*, since she is not her own Head, and no one has any right to make laws for her, for no one is her Head but Christ. Christ alone is the law-maker of the church, and no rule or regulation in the Christian church stands for anything unless in its spirit, at least, it has the mind of Christ to support and back it up. Such-and-such a thing has been thought to be right in the church, and therefore it has been laid down and made prescriptive—the *tradition* of the fathers has established a certain custom. What then? Why this—that if we can distinctly see that the custom and prescription are not according to the tenor of Holy Scripture and the Spirit of Christ, neither of them are anything to us! But

what if the custom is supported by all the good men of every age? I say that matters *nothing* if the Lord has not taught it! Our conscience is not to be bound! If a law were backed up by 50,000 times as many as all the saints, it would have no authority upon the conscience even of the weakest Christian if not laid down by our King Himself! And the violation of such a commandment of men would be no sin but might indeed, become a Christian *duty* in order to let men see that we are not the servants of men, but the servants of Jesus Christ the Lord! In spiritual things it is of the utmost importance to keep this fact clear—that nonconformity is only *sinful* when it refuses to conform to the *will of Christ*, and conformity itself is a great sin when it obeys a rule which is not of the Lord's ordaining! When we meet together in church meetings, we cannot make laws for the Lord's kingdom! We dare not attempt it! Such necessary regulations as may be made for carrying out our Lord's commands—to meet for worship and to proclaim the gospel—are commendable because they are acts necessary to obedience to His highest laws, but even these minor details are not tolerable if they clearly violate the spirit and mind of Jesus Christ. He has given us *spiritual* guides rather than legal rubrics, and fettering liturgies! And He has left us at liberty to follow the directions of His own free Spirit; but if we make a regulation, thinking it to be very wise—if it is contrary to the Spirit of our Lord, the rule is itself evil, and is not to be borne with! In such a case the church has trenched upon the rights of her Head, and has done what she ought not to have done; she has, in effect, snatched from His hand the scepter, and set up a schism. Law-making in the church was finished in that day when the curse was pronounced on him who should take from or add to the word of God! Christ alone is the legislator of His church—none but He!

But I go further and venture to say that Christ is not only the legislator of the church, and has left to us His Statute-Book, sufficient to guide us in every dilemma, but He is also the living administrator in the church. He is not here, it is true, but as monarchs often administrate through lieutenants, so the Lord Jesus administers through His ever-living Spirit who dwells in the hearts of His people. You are not to think of Christ as of one who is dead and buried! If He were here on earth, I suppose nobody would claim to be the Head of the church but Himself. His presence would at once overawe every pretender— and now, though He is not here in person, yet He is not dead! He lives! He sits on the throne prepared for Him at the right hand of the Father! In Spirit He is here. "Lo! I am *with you always*, even unto the end of the world." And what must the true Head of the church think when He sees another put up on His throne, and impiously called by His title? What must the living Head moving in the midst of the church feel in regard to such a blasphemous intrusion as that? He, the Holy Spirit, is the Vicegerent of Christ, the representative of the absent Son of Man! And how does this Spirit administer the laws of God? I answer, through His people, for the Holy Spirit dwells in true believers; and when they meet together as the Lord's servants, and humbly ask His guidance, they may expect to have it—and opening the Statute- Book and seeing plain directions as to their course of action, they may be quite sure that what they do has their Master's sanction! If they look, first of all, for the direction in their Lord's Law-Book, and next seek to be instructed as to its meaning by the Holy Spirit—though they are many minds, they shall be led as one man to choose that course of action which shall be after the mind of Christ. Acting humbly and obediently, not on their own authority, but in the authority of Jesus Christ, who, by His Spirit still rules in His church—believers practically show Christ, still, to be the only

Head of His church as to actual administration as well as to legislation.

The sole authority of Jesus Christ in all respects must be maintained rigorously, but churches are very apt to be guided by something else. Some would have us guided by *results;* we have heard a discussion upon the question whether or not we should continue missionary operations, since there are so few converted! How can the question ever be raised while the Master's orders run thus—"Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"? Spoken by the mouth of Jesus, our ruler, that command stands good, and the *results* of missions can have no effect upon loyal minds, either one way or the other as to their prosecution! If from this day for the next 10,000 years not a single soul should be converted to God by foreign missions—if there still remained a church of Christ, it would be her duty with increasing vigor to thrust her sons forward into the mission field because her duty is *not* measured by the *result*, but by the imperial *authority* of Christ! Equally so the church is not to be regulated by the *times*. We are told by some that this age requires a different kind of preaching from that of a hundred years ago—and that 200 years ago, in Puritan times, doctrines were suitable which are exploded now. We are told the minister must keep abreast of the age—this is a thoughtful and philosophic period, and the preacher must therefore *philosophize,* and bring forth his own thinking rather than "mere declamation"—which is the learned name for a plain declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ! But, sirs, it is not so! Our King is the same, and the doctrines He has given us have not been changed by His authority, nor the rules He has laid down reversed by His proclamation! He is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Let the times be polished or uncouth; let them become philosophical or sink into barbarism—our duty is still the same, in solemn loyalty to Jesus

Christ, to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified! But the discoveries of science, we are told, have materially affected belief, and therefore we should change our ways accordingly as philosophy changes. No, it must not be so! This is a stumbling stone, and a rock of offense against which he who stumbles shall be broken. We still have the same King, still the same laws, still the same teaching of the word, and we are to deliver this teaching after the same sort, and in the same spirit! *Semper idem* must be our motto—always the same, always keeping close to Jesus Christ, and glorifying Him—for *He* and not the *times*, not the *philosophy,* and not the *wit* of man must rule and govern the church of God! If we shall do this, if any church shall do this—namely, take its truth from Jesus' lips, live according to Jesus' word, and go forward in His name—such a church cannot, by any possibility, fail, for the failure of such a church would be the failure of the Master's own authority! Brothers and sisters, He has told us if we keep His commandments we shall abide in His love! He will be with us always, even to the end of the world! And He has given to His church His Holy Spirit according to the fullness of those words which He uttered when He breathed on His apostles, "Whoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoever sins you retain, they are retained." So then, a church acting for Christ, with His authority denouncing the judgments of God upon sin, shall find those judgments follow; and opening the treasure house of God's mercy to those who seek Jesus Christ by faith, those treasures shall be freely given according to the church's declaration, which she made in her Master's name. Go in her *own* name, and she fails! Go in her *Lord's* name, and she succeeds! Walk in obedience to His Statute-Book, and deliver herself from the lordship of men, and the church's history shall be written in some such lines as these,

"Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

I have in these words, I am afraid, rather confusedly stated what I believe Scripture teaches with regard to the headship of Christ, namely, that He is the *only* teacher of doctrine, the only maker of Spiritual laws; that He is the living administrator of the laws of His own spiritual kingdom, and therefore no authority is to be yielded unto the church but that of Christ—and when we have that authority, and are obedient to it, we need entertain no fear as to the result.

III. Thirdly, **ON WHAT DOES THIS HEADSHIP REST?**

Very briefly, it rests on the natural supremacy of Christ's nature. Who could be Head but Jesus? He is a *perfect* man, which we are not; He is the first-born among many brethren, and we are but the younger and weaker; He is God over all, blessed forever and ever; surely, none but He should be King in Zion since there is no part of the church which is divine except its glorious Head! The headship of Christ is the inevitable and necessary result of His work. Hear how His members sing—

"You have redeemed our souls with blood,
Have set the prisoners free;
Have made us kings and priests to God,
And we shall reign with Thee."

Who could be Head but He to whom such praise can be awarded? He has washed us in His blood—He must be Head! He has loved us from before the foundation of the world—He must be chief! His right hand, and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory—let Him be crowned King of kings, and Lord of lords! That winepress in which He trod His enemies till His garments were dyed with blood, was the guarantee to Him that

He should sit on His Father's throne, and reign forever and ever!

Moreover, the decree of God has decided this beyond dispute. Read the second Psalm, and learn that when the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed, the Lord sitting in the heavens *laughed* at their conspiracy, and scorned the gathering of His foes! "Yet," says He, "have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." I will declare the decree— "The Lord has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You." How gloriously the promise reads: "Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." It is part of the eternal purpose which constituted the church that Christ should be made its Head, and if there is a church of the living God, it is also inevitable that of that church Christ should be the sole Head. Moreover, brethren, and but once more—is not our Lord the Head of the church by universal acclamation, and consent of all the members of that church? We have *never* set up a rival candidate! No heart renewed by His grace can desire any other king!—

"Let Him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed His head to death!
And be His honors sounded high
By all things that have breath."

Rivals in His blood-bought dominion? Rivals against the Son of David? Let them be swept away as the smoke! Let them be as driven stubble to His bow! King Jesus! All hail! Long live the King! Bring forth the royal diadem! See you not how the angels crown Him? Hear you not to the songs of cherubim and

seraphim, "For You are worthy, You are worthy to take the book, and loose the seven seals thereof"? Hear you not the everlasting chant of those who have overcome through His blood, "You are worthy, You are worthy, for You were slain, and have redeemed us unto God by Your blood"? While the church on earth joins in the same solemn canticle, "Crown Him, crown Him, crown Him Lord of all, for worthy is the Lamb that was slain." By the supremacy of His nature; by the necessity of His accomplished work; by the decree of the Father; by the universal assent of all the blood-washed, He is the *only* Head of His own church!

IV. What then, brothers and sisters, **WHAT THEN, DOES THIS CONDEMN?**

What does it condemn? It condemns the villainous pretense of a Papal headship! A priest at Rome is the head of the church of Jesus Christ, indeed! Well, if the Pope is head of the church—if he is so—then look at what, according to Scripture, he is. This Pio Nono is this—he is the head of the body, the church "who is the *beginning*." Was there nothing, then, before this aforesaid Pius IX? "The first-born from the dead"? Does he claim to have risen from the dead? "That in all things He might have the preeminence"—is this also the old Italian's right? "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell"—blasphemy dares not apply this to the tottering prince whose treasury needs replenishing with Peter's pence. Yet this is the description of the person who is the Head of the church, and if Pius IX is not all that, he is no head of the church! But perhaps he is the *second* head? Then Christ's church is a monstrous being with two heads! They may make it out to be three one day, perhaps, and then we will call the thing Cerberus, and helldog and we shall not be far off from the true idea of Popery! No, but he is the *delegated* head. What for? Why should Christ delegate authority which He can wield Himself?

"But we *need* a delegation, for Christ is absent"; but the Holy Spirit is that delegation, and is *here*. Of all the dreams that ever deluded men, and probably of all blasphemies that ever were uttered, there has never been one which is more absurd, and which is more fruitful in all manner of mischief than the idea that the Bishop of Rome can be the head of the church of Jesus Christ! No, these popes die, and are not! And how could the church live if its head were dead? The true Head ever lives, and the church ever lives in Him!

But it is affirmed that there must be a *visible* headship, and just now we are told every day that we must choose in church matters between the headship of the monarch of England, and the headship of the pope at Rome. I beg the gentlemen's pardon—we have no such choice, for when we are asked which we will have to rule us in *spiritual* things, we say, "Neither—neither for a single moment!" We make no bones about the matter; kings and queens are no heads of the church to us! We will no more brook spiritual domination from an English premier than from a Romish pope! We are equally opposed to both—all human headship must go down! To our well-beloved queen, all honor and reverence as to one of the best of rulers in *civil* affairs, but in *spiritual* affairs in the church of Christ she has no ruling power—what she may have in the Church of England is another question. To us it makes no matter whether it is man or woman—whether it is prince or priest—we will have neither czar, emperor, queen, pope, seraph, or angel to reign in the church of Jesus Christ! The church has no lawful governor or supreme Lord but Jesus Christ Himself. Our Lord, as it seems to me, puts this so plainly in the word of God, that I marvel men who believe in the Bible should think the state could be at the head of the church! The state-church party has placed a Bible with a crown and a scepter upon their posters! It is suggestive that the Bible is closed—for if Englishmen were

once to read it, it would be fatal to the cause which now claims it, since one of the truths of God they would read would be this—"My kingdom is not of this world." And they would hear Christ say, "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's"— that is, yield all civil obedience to the civil authority, "but unto God the things that are God's." Leave the Lord to rule in the kingdom of mind and spirit, and let Caesar keep his kingdom of civil government! Let the state do its work, and never interfere with the church! And let the church do her work, and never interfere with, or be interfered with, by the state! The two kingdoms are separate and distinct. Broad lines of demarcation are always drawn throughout the whole of the New Testament, between the spiritual and the temporal power—and the mischief is when men cannot see this. Christ is the Head of the church, not anyone who represents the state. Brothers and sisters, just think for a minute what mischief this doctrine of the headship of the state has done. Time was when men could hardly be parish ushers without coming to take the sacrament at the established church. Oh, the multiplied hypocrisies which were perpetrated every day by graceless men who came to qualify themselves for office by taking the emblems of our holy faith when they knew not Christ! Such things are more or less inevitable to the system. Think, again, what persecutions have risen out of this error. You cannot put any sect into a position of ascendancy but it falls into persecution—all sects have persecuted, in turn, when so tempted. There is not a pin to choose between one and the other, except, as I sometimes say, the Baptists have never persecuted because they have never had an opportunity. But I will not insist even upon that. It is in human nature to do ill when the civil arm is ready to crush conscience, and therefore Christ has taken the temptation out of the way, and put it out of the possibility of His people, if they keep close to His rule,

so much as to touch the carnal weapon. The weapons of their warfare, He tells them, are not carnal, but *spiritual,* and therefore mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

What degradation to the church of Christ to think of having any other Head but Christ! Ah, brothers and sisters, if the monarch were the most holy and godly person that ever lived, I should tremble for him exceedingly that such a person should in any sense be styled the Head of the church! How could such a person *pray?* How could a poor sinner—and such the best man still is—come before Christ, and pray to Him, and say, "Lord, You know I am the head of Your church"? It seems to me to be such an atrocious claim, such a horrible profanity! I would not, for twice 10,000 worlds, touch that title with so much as the tip of my finger if I hoped to be saved! I dare not expose my friend, or even my enemy, to the awful risk he must make assuming such a title! I judge no one, God forbid I should! But if I saw in this world a man absolutely perfect, full of divine knowledge and light, and I were asked by him, "Shall I assume that title?" I should go down on my knees and say, "For God's sake, and for your own soul's sake, touch it not, for how can you, with your light, and knowledge, and love to Christ, take from Him one of His grandest names?" But what shall I say when the monarch is the opposite? And such cases have occurred. I need not take you far back in history; the name of George IV has no remarkable odor of sanctity about it—and the same may be said of Charles II; I never heard historians say that he was eminent in godliness. But yet these men were heads of the church! I shudder at being compelled to remember such an infamous fact; men whose character is not to be thought of without a blush on the cheek of modesty, were heads of the church of Jesus Christ! God have mercy on this land for having fallen so low as this, for I know not that heathen countries have ever blasphemed God more than we have done in allowing

heartless debauchers to take upon themselves the name of "head of the church of Christ"! No, my brothers and sisters, this cannot be endured by us in any church with which we commune! We repudiate it! We shake off the abomination as Paul shook off the viper from his hand into the fire!

The same rebuke is due to that which has been tolerated in many churches, namely, the headship of great religious teachers. Sometimes great teachers, while yet alive, have been practically regarded as the supreme arbiters of the church. Their will was law, apart from the Book; their decree stood fast, apart from the Scripture. All this was evil! There are certain churches at this day which reverence extremely the names of dead men. "The Fathers"—are they not by some thought to be as great as the apostles? The names of John Wesley, and John Calvin, and others, I fear, very often occupy the place which belongs to Jesus Christ. Let every church of Jesus Christ now declare that she follows not *men,* but obeys her Master alone!

Mark you, brothers and sisters, the truth which I have brought out somewhat strongly equally applies to the church itself, for the church is not her own head—she has no right to act upon her own judgment apart from the statutes of her King! She must come to the Bible—everything is there for her; she has no right to use her own judgment apart from the Master. She must go to the Master. She is a *servant,* and the Master is supreme. The church's power is twofold; it is a power to *testify* to the world what Christ has revealed, and she is set as a witness, and she must act as such. She has, next, a *ministerial* power by which she carries out the will of Christ, and does His bidding as Christ's servant and minister. A certain number of servants meet in the servants' hall—they have an order given to do such work, and they have also orders given them how to do it. They then consult with each other as to the minor details—how they can best observe the Master's rule, and do His bidding. They

are perfectly right in so doing; but suppose they began to consult about whether the objects proposed by the Master were good, or whether the rules which He had laid down might not be altered? They would at once become rebellious, and be in danger of discharge. So a church met together to consult how to carry out the Master's will, and how to enforce His laws does rightly. But a church meeting to make *new* laws, or a church meeting to rule according to its own judgment and opinion—imagining that its decision will have weight—has made a mistake, and placed itself in a false position. The one doctrine which I have sought to bring forward is this—that He, alone, who *bought* the church, and *saved* the church, is to *rule* the church!

V. But if so, **WHAT IS THE LESSON WHICH IT TEACHES TO EACH ONE HERE?** Does not it make each of you inquire, "If the entire church is thus to yield obedience to Christ, and to no one else, am *I* yielding such obedience? I claim to be Christian, but am I a Christian of that prejudiced sort who follows that which they are brought up to, and so acknowledge the rules of *mothers and fathers* instead of the rule of *Christ?* Have I brought what I avow to be the truth of God to the touchstone of Scripture? Did I ever spend a quarter of an hour in weighing my cherished opinions?" I am afraid the great mass of Christians have never done this—but have sucked in their religion with their mother's milk, and nothing further.

Again, if I am a Christian, am I in the habit of judging what I ought to do by my own whims and wishes, or do I judge by the Statute-Book of the King? Many say they do not like this, and do not like that—as if that had anything to do with it! What are your likes and dislikes? You are a *servant,* and bound to give up your will to the Master! If Christ gives a command which you imagine to be hard because it does not chime in with your love of ease—my brothers and sisters will you not, as servants of the Master, put your whims aside, and endeavor to follow

Him? Oh, it is a blessed life to live—to be no longer the servant of *men* or of *self*—but to go to Christ daily in prayer, and say, "What I know not, teach me, Lord." Then you may laugh at Satan's rage, and face a frowning world, for the Master will never leave those who cleave to Him! If a man loves the testimonies and commandments of the Most High, God shall be his buckler, his shield, and his high tower; but if he turns aside to his own imaginings, his fall shall be certain! May the Lord keep the church in this matter, and her day of victory shall soon come. May Christ be her only Head, and her triumph draws near! I can see the morning breaking—yonder are the first streaks of light upon the sky—the Master is coming because the church begins to acknowledge Him, and then shall her happy days begin, and the days of her mourning shall be ended forever and ever.

840 DO NOT SIN AGAINST THE CHILD – GEN. 42:22

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, November 8, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child?"
— Genesis 42:22

THUS REUBEN REMINDED his brothers of his admonition concerning Joseph—thus would I address you with regard to your own children.

I thought it meet, beloved friends, as our friend Mr. Hammond is coming among us to labor for the conversion of the young, that I should as it were, this morning, deliver the preface to his series of services. Perhaps by enlisting the consideration, and the affectionate prayers of God's people for the young, I may be doing more to help my friend in his work than it would be possible for me to do by any other means.

Note the words of the text. "Spoke I not unto you, saying, *Do not sin against the child?"* The essence of sin lies in its being committed against *God*. When men are fully convinced that they have disobeyed the Lord, and that this is "the head and front of their offending," then they are brought to a true perception of the character of sin. Hence David's penitential psalm has for its acutest cry, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." Yet the sword of sin cuts both ways; it not only contends against God, but against

His creatures, too. It is a double evil. Like a bursting shell, it scatters evil on every side; every relationship which we sustain involves duty, and consequently may be perverted into an occasion for sin. We are no sooner in this world than, as children we sin against our parents; as members of a family we sin against brothers and sisters, and against playmates, and acquaintances; we launch into the outside world, and around our ship sins dash like raging billows! As our various relations are multiplied, our sins also increase; we sin against a husband or against a wife, against a servant or against a master, against a buyer or a seller. On all sides the roots of our soul suck up sin from the earth in which they spread. We sin in public and sin in private; we sin against our poverty, and against our wealth; our evil nature, like the deadly upas tree, distils its venom—the poison of sin drops on all who come under our shadow. As the sea surrounds all shores, so sin beats with deadly waves upon all connected with our life; our sin assails both heaven and earth, time and eternity, great and small, old men and children.

The text calls us to consider one particular form of sin, namely, sinning against a child, and it is of that I intend to speak this morning, looking up to the great Father of spirits that He would teach me to speak aright. First, what is this which has been spoken to us? "Do not sin against the child." Secondly, *who said it?* And, thirdly, *what then?*

I. First—and this will occupy most of our time this morning—**WHAT IS THIS WHICH HAS BEEN SAID TO US?** *"Do not sin against the child."*

This warning may be suitable for every one of us without exception; those who are not parents, and who are not teachers of the young are, nevertheless, bound to remember that they are in a commonwealth of which young people make up a very considerable part; little eyes are quick to observe the actions of those who are grown up—adults should be careful what they

do. Every man by his own conduct is, more or less, educating the rising generation of the nation. If a man acts amiss; if his speech is foul; if his conversation is polluted, he helps to educate children in the school of Belial. If on the other hand, his ways are right, and by the grace of God he is made to act morally, and to speak truthfully, he is doing something, it may be unconsciously, but still he is doing something to train up one for virtue and holiness. The exhalations of our moral conduct sweeten or defile the general atmosphere of society, and in this children as well as others are partakers. I would say to every man who is giving full swing to his passions, if nothing else will check you, at any rate pause awhile when yonder fair-haired girls, and lisping children are gazing upon you; if you care not for angels, stop for the sake of yon blue-eyed boy; let not the leprosy of your sin pollute your offspring more than must be. Were you about to utter a lascivious sentence? Withhold it, I pray you, for it is not right that little ears should so soon be desecrated by that which has become common enough to *you*, but will as yet be shocking to them. Were you about to blaspheme? Is it not enough to curse your Maker? Why need you bring a second curse upon that harmless little one? Why teach those lips that will be all too ready to learn to speak the hideous word? Man, if any feeling is left in you, respect the purity of childhood, and let the presence of youth, if it is not a motive for sanctity, at any rate be a reason for *restraint* in open sin! Do not sin cruelly and wantonly against the child.

But I would not merely put it in a light which may suit the vilest. You, dear friend, whoever you may be, owe a service to your neighbor; you are to love him as yourself, and that word, "neighbor," includes all mankind! The bond of the command is not limited to those who are over twenty-one, and have assumed the responsibilities of manhood; when God wrote this

law, He meant it to take in the whole sweep of our race. The religion of Christ is a religion of love to mankind as such—it bids us regard the baby upon its mother's knee as well as the gray-beard leaning upon his staff—to all it speaks of love. You are bound, therefore, by the universal law, to have a love towards children, and as in the first place you are to refrain from doing or saying anything which would injure their morals for this life, so are you bound, as much as lies in you, to do all you can to train them by your own example for excellence, and happiness in the path of right. I put forth God's claim and man's claim this morning, to all of you—a claim from which you cannot escape by any pretense whatever; a claim which cannot be forgotten without *sin*. We are all under obligations, both to old and young, to rich and poor, and especially I urge the claims of those who as yet cannot speak for themselves; to each and every child you are under an obligation as a member of the great human family, as a citizen in one great kingdom to do nothing which may injure, and everything which may promote his future welfare. I summon before you all, the host who gather at their mothers' knees, and beseech you by the heart of humanity not to drag these little ones down to hell!

To the *parent* the text speaks with a still small voice, to which I trust none of us will be deaf, *"Do not sin against the child"*—against your own dear child! Yet how many parents do! If as I now speak, unconverted parents will be compelled to acknowledge the truthfulness of the accusations I shall lay against them, I hope they will be led to deep and true repentance. There are many parents who neglect altogether the religious education of their children; were their children born *without souls*, they could not be more indifferent to their welfare than they now are; if it were revealed to them that their little ones, when they slept in their coffins, would be as the offspring of dogs, and horses which have no hereafter, they could not

treat them in a more thoughtless fashion than they now do! Why, are there not many of you who when you have sent your children to Sunday school, think you have done all that is to be done for them? And even if this little is neglected, you are content; you never prayed for your babies, how can you? You do not yet know what it is to pray for *yourselves* in sincerity and truth; you never pointed your Samuels and Hannahs to the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." How could you? Your own sin lies upon you unforgiven! You have never instructed the dear little ones in the danger of rebellion against God, and in the necessity of being reconciled to Him through faith in the precious blood of Christ—how can we expect you to do this while you yourselves remain aliens and strangers to the blessed God, and have not submitted *yourselves* to the gospel of Jesus Christ? I remember a woman who was converted at an advanced age, who had been left years before a widow with many children; she was a most exemplary, moral, and industrious woman, and earned her living by most laborious work; yet she managed to bring up all her family, and settle them in a suitable manner. But after her conversion I think I never saw more bitter tears than those which she shed when she said, "I took care to feed them, and clothe their bodies, but I never thought of their souls! Alas for me, I knew no better! But alas for them, I left the chief thing undone! The other day I spoke to my eldest son about the things of God, and he told me religion was all a farce; he did not listen to a word I said, and well," she said, "might he be an infidel, when his mother never said a word by which he could have been led to the Savior." Words were spoken by way of comfort to her, but like Rachel, she refused to be comforted because, she said, and said truly, her great opportunity had been wasted! The best time of effort for a mother had been allowed to pass away unused; her harvest was passed, and her summer was ended,

and her children were not saved! Some of you who are now godless, I trust may be brought to the same repentance, but I would have you saved such bitter regret by being led *now* to give your hearts to Christ while yet your children are about you.

In speaking to parents I put the charge in the mildest terms, and have said that some have done nothing to train their families for the Savior, but graver accusations may be brought. Are there not some here who have done much the other way, much to *quench* the motions of the Spirit in the juvenile mind; done much to harden the children's hearts, and to lull their consciences to sleep? It is a disgraceful fact that many fathers educate their children for the service of Satan. They are the devil's lackeys, introducing their sons into the courts of the evil one. When parents take their children to the theater, what can they expect to be the result? When they send them to the beer shop, or let them see their drunkenness, what surer school of vice can they send them to? Parents, who teach their children to sing the silly, frivolous, and perhaps licentious songs, are sacrificing them to Moloch! Shame is it when from a father's lips the boy hears the first oath, and learns the alphabet of blasphemy! There are crowds of parents upon whose head the blood of their children will certainly descend because they have launched them on the sea of life with the rudder set towards the rocks—with a false chart, a deceitful compass, and every other appliance for securing eternal shipwreck. Doubtless there are some unconverted men and women here whose example has already come home to them in the ungrateful conduct of their sons. They have seen their children grow up to be estranged from them, and if they are, therefore, blaming the providence of God, let them pause awhile, and ask themselves whether they ought not rather to blame *themselves*—are they not reaping according to their sowing? What are our children, for the most part, but what we make them by our training? And if

they have grown up like ourselves and our faults are mirrored in their characters, let us repent in dust and ashes before God! Never think it a hard law that our sins against our children should recoil upon ourselves; fathers and mothers who sin against your children, I fear you will be lost yourselves, but before that doom overtakes you, I pray you remember that you will not perish *alone* in your iniquity—your household will suffer with you! If you have no care about your own souls, yet think, I pray you, of the little ones entrusted to you; you have some in heaven whom sovereign mercy has caught away from the cradle and the breast, that they may sing the praises of God forever. I cannot bear to think that you should drag the others down to the pit of hell! For your own sake, for *their* sake, pause awhile—murder not your own flesh and blood! Repent of your own personal sins, and seek mercy at the hands of Jesus that you may from now on never more sin against the child!

If these things come home forcibly to you who are unsaved, much more to Christian parents! Do Christian parents ever sin against their children? We answer, Christian parents are not perfect; they are yet in the body, and have yet to mourn over sins and shortcomings, and so, not condemning you who fear God—for who shall condemn whom Christ has justified?—yet let me, for the awakening of your consciences, and to drive you again to the blood of Jesus for pardon, remind you that we, alas, too often *do* sin against our children! We are under a double responsibility, not only because they are our children, but because God has given us salvation. We are bound, having the light of God, to give that light to all around us, and bound by other ties to first give the light to those who have sprung from our loins. If we deny our most loving efforts to our own households, we must surely be inhuman! Not only may we not talk of divine grace, we can scarcely boast of fulfilling the promptings of nature itself, if we have no compassion for our

children's souls. Yet what do you think—may not our inconsistencies be the reason why our children are not converted? Is the boy compelled to say, "My father hardly believes what he says, or else he would not act as he does"? Do you not think that in many families where the parents are worldly, and conformed to the world, it would be a great wonder if the sons and daughters were not ungodly? Are there not many Christians so busy about making money that they have no time to speak about *soul* concerns to their children? And if those children were to die, do you think those parents could excuse themselves? If their children died without hope, how would their parents quiet their consciences? Do we as a rule pray for our own children as we ought? Do we wrestle with God for them night and day? Do we ever spend an hour in pleading with the Most High that they might live in His sight? And if we *have* prayed, do we use such efforts for our children as dying beds will make us wish that we *had* used? Have we spoken personally to them about their salvation? Having done it once, have we repeated it? If we fear that we have not touched the right chord of the heart, have we made up our minds to persevere in affectionate admonitions, and earnest entreaties until every one of them shall be saved? I know that some of you have done so. I rejoice in some fathers and mothers in this congregation, that they do lay themselves out for the conversion of their children, and of these I may also add that for the most part, they have seen the desire of their hearts. But where there has been no desire, and no prayer, and no effort—if the children die unsaved, what balm can heal the mother's wounds? O you who have been baptized into Christ, and profess to have put on Christ! O you who claim to love your Lord and Master, what shall we say to you if your sons shall be unchastened like those of Eli, and shall die in their sins? If your sons turn out to be Nadabs and Abihas, and not

Samuels, how can we console you if you have not wept over them? If they rebel like Absalom, who can wonder if their father never poured out his heart before the Lord on their account? Do you expect to reap without sowing, or to gather where you have not planted? Parental care can alone preserve household piety, and if that is gone, the pillars of the nation are removed! It is an ill day for any church when family piety is on the decline; household religion has been the great defense of England against Popery! Do not tell me of your State-paid clergy, and their lofty prelates; give me family prayer, and the Pope may curse away as long as he likes! Give us the open catechism, and the children made to understand it! Give us the Bible read from day to day, and godly parents inculcating gospel truths upon their little ones' minds, and we may laugh to scorn all the powers of Pope or Satan! But once let the family altar be forsaken, and let parents forget the natural duty of ordering their households before the Lord, and you may guard the church as you will, your labor will be in vain! You have cast down her hedges; the bear out of the woods shall waste her! You have taken away the tower of the flock, and when the wolf comes, he will find the sheep an easy prey! Christian parents, though I cannot address you this morning as I would, yet with all my heart would I say to you— do not sin against the child by your bad example, or by your negligence as to his salvation—but seek of the Holy Spirit that to your own offspring you may fully discharge the solemn duties which providence and grace have thrown upon you!

The text has a word next to *teachers,* teachers especially of our Sunday schools, though I hold that teachers of weekday schools ought not to consider themselves exempted from seeking the good of the souls entrusted to them. Teachers of Sunday schools, you have voluntarily assumed a position, the responsibility of which is not to be laid aside as long as you

continue in the office. I beseech you, do not sin against the child! He comes to you, this afternoon, to learn something; do not be cold and sleepy over your work, but tell him of Jesus lovingly, simply, earnestly; do not lead him to feel that you have yourself no faith in what you teach, but be so earnest that he may see conviction gleaming from your eyes, and may soon, in return, feel it flashing into his heart! Remember, other teachers have been prayerful over their children; they have brought their boys and girls to Jesus, and have won a blessing from the Master—will not you be prayerful, too? If not, it would be better for those children that you had never been born, and that some better teacher had been set over them! Do not sin against the child, therefore, by cumbering the ground, and occupying a place which might have been far more profitably filled by a more earnest spirit. In the weekday do not sin against the child by conduct inconsistent with your profession; do not sin against the child by neglecting him during the six days if you have opportunities for visitation; seek his good at all times, follow him with your prayers and tears if you cannot with your personal visits, and loving words. As God gives you opportunity, let importunate entreaties, and fervent prayers go together—entreaties to him and prayers to God—and who knows, God may give you his soul as a seal to your faithful ministry! Teacher, do not sin against the child by failure in anything to which conscience calls you. I am afraid, in looking back upon our own Sunday school experience, some of us will have to acknowledge that we *did* sin against the children a great deal, that we made our class rather a school for teaching, reading, and repeating texts, and singing hymns than an occasion for aiming at heart-renewal, and *immediate* salvation. By the way, let me say while I am speaking to teachers, the word is equally applicable to some of you who are not teachers, but ought to be. In many of our churches the work of teaching the

young is left to the very youngest, and advanced Christians usually decline the service. Is this as it should be? I take it that for this work, the church ought to send forth her picked men and women. If any of you have ability for the teaching of youth, and are not using the talent, you are sinning against the child quite as much as if you undertook the work, and did not perform it thoroughly. There are schools in this neighborhood languishing for lack of teachers; we have letters constantly sent to us, "Can you send us help?" And it is a crying shame that in a neighborhood so blessed with the gospel, there should be any Sunday school pining for lack of teachers to instruct the children! I am told that in some schools near this Tabernacle, there are sometimes 50 or 100 children without teachers! I charge you, men and women who know Christ, while such spheres are before you, do not stand back from them lest it be charged upon you in the Day of Judgment, concerning these little ones, that you withheld from them the bread of life, and left them to die in the dark!

The text further bears with equal severity upon the preacher; I feel it chides and chastens me. Preaching is full often too obscure for children; the words are too long, the sentences too involved, the matter too mysterious. Well might the sermon be styled like matrimony in the prayer-book, "an excellent mystery." I believe I have as much as most of my brothers, sought out simple words, and many dear children have heard the word from me, and have been profited, while many others of them delight to come to the Tabernacle to listen to the minister. Still, we who occupy the pulpit do not feed the lambs as we should; we should give them not merely a word now and then, but if possible the whole discourse should be such as they can understand. Sacred simplicity should be so cultivated by the ambassador of Christ that lads and lasses should hear intelligently under a good shepherd and the least

lamb should be able to find food. Is it always so with ministers? I have my confessions to make, and some of my brothers, if they are ever awakened to a sense of sin about the matter, will have even longer confessions to offer, since in our pulpits we too often sin against the child.

But we must push on. I want the *church of God,* and especially this church, to attend carefully to the next few remarks. When teachers and others are earnest about the conversion of children, and some of them are converted, they then come into relationship with the church, and too often the *Lord's people need the advice,* "Do not sin against the child." How can a *church* so offend? It can do so by not believing in the conversion of children at all! I am persuaded there are hundreds of Christians who in their hearts altogether mistrust the worth of regeneration unless the party born-again is over 16 or 18 years of age! If the inmost thoughts of many professors could be spoken, it would be seen that they are at once suspicious of a conversion if the convert is only 13 years of age, and yet would cheerfully endorse the same conversion if the person were 30 or seventy! There is a sad respect of persons among us still—a lingering belief that a certain period of years spent *in sin must have elapsed* before a work can be commenced! And yet, if you were to think, the conversion of a child is, in itself, no more difficult than the conversion of a full-grown man! With God all things are possible! If it were right to compare two equally divine works, it should seem to be an easier thing to renew the child than the man! There is less of the dire force of habit to overcome; there is less to forget, less to repent of! Though there is nothing spiritually good in us by nature, yet there is a certain simplicity about the child—a readiness of belief, an absence of cautiousness and questioning, which is exceedingly helpful in receiving the truth of God. Where two things are both impossible, except with God, we may draw comparisons.

I would really say that the conversion of the child appears to be the simpler work of the two—and how then, have we come to imagine it not to be so, I can scarcely tell! Surely that same Holy Spirit who can enter into the man of 70, and overcome his sins, and make him to become like a little child, can enter, also, into the *child* and overcome *his* natural depravity, and make him willing, in the day of God's power, and lead him to faith in Jesus! If salvation had to do with mysterious doctrines hard to be understood; if to be a Christian one needed to comprehend the Hebrew and the Greek languages, we might admit the difficulty of the conversion of little children, but if it is all so simple that he that runs may read, and he that reads may still continue to run; if it is all so plain as to be nothing more than this, "He who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved"—why not a *child* as capable of faith as an *adult?* And why may it not be as probable that we may see numbers of children converted to God, as that numbers of adults may give their allegiance to the faith? Get rid of this base idea then, lest you be found sinning against the child! God can save children! He has saved many! He has proved to His unbelieving church the greatness of His power towards the little ones; thrust out the thought then, and *expect* from this day forward, that God will save the children as well as others!

Having believed that their conversion is possible, when you hear of it, be willing to believe it is so. I do not ask of children that they should be received into the church without examination; I do not claim for a youngster who declares that he is a believer in Christ, that he should be received into the church with any less rigorous examination than any adult; all I ask is that he should not be tormented with needless suspicions, and looked upon as an impostor! Brothers and sisters, it would be very greatly sinning against children if the moment their little susceptible minds were made to feel terror on account of sin,

we would put *that* down as repentance; or the moment they felt some joy at the thought of the love of Christ we should assure them that they *possessed* faith; this would be to educate them in self-deception. We should not look to find in the young more than in the old, but as far as faith and repentance are concerned, we must require quite as much; I mean that the same repentance which is necessary in an adult in order to salvation is indispensable in a child. The faith of God's elect is the same faith in the youth as in the gray-headed; nothing short of *real* repentance, and *true* faith in Christ can save anybody, and there is no difference in age at all in that respect. We ought, therefore, to expect in a child a sincere hatred of sin, a true sense of its evil, a conviction that he cannot save himself, and a simple reliance upon the work of Jesus which we expect in any other convert. Less than this will leave young or old short of eternal life. Many say, "We must hope for the best, and we must not expect too much of a child." But I reply we would do that child most serious injury if we taught him to be *satisfied* with that which is *unsatisfactory,* and to rest anywhere but in the Lord Jesus! We must expect as much, but what I plead for is we must not expect more! I am sure that there are some ministers, and church members who discourage at once any profession of faith from boys and girls. "Oh yes," they say, "it is the morning cloud, and the early dew; it will soon pass away." They utter sharp and hard things which, if Satan needed instruments, would be the very ones to grieve tender hearts! They put on such frowns, and give themselves such lofty airs that humble, timid children shrink back, and are to the church for many a day, perhaps, kept outside her pale. Let us judge them *righteously*, but let us not judge them *censoriously;* let us be willing to receive them to baptism, and to the Lord's Table, and when they are received, instead of thinking of them as though they were less valuable than other members, let us count them to be the very

pride of the flock. I hate to hear people say, "They have received a pack of children into the church." "A pack of children," yes, and if Jesus carries them in His bosom, surely you are not imitating Christ, nor exhibiting much of His Spirit when you look down upon them and despise them! To me, one soul is as good as another; I rejoice as much in the addition of the poorest mechanic to this church as if he were a peer of the realm; I am as grateful to God when I hear of repentance in the young as in the aged, for *souls*, after all, are not affected in value by rank or age. Immortal spirits are all priceless, and not to be weighed in the scale with worlds. I pray you, therefore, *rejoice* if the Spirit of God dwells in the lowly or in the great, in the young or in the old! He is the same Spirit; He makes each renewed person equally His temple, and each saved one is equally a jewel of Christ—dear to the heart of the Eternal Father, beloved by Him who redeemed all His people alike with His most precious blood! Let us not, therefore, as a church, sin against the child.

II. WHO SAYS THIS TO US?

Nature says it first. The instincts of humanity cry, "Do not sin against the child; it is but a child; it is little—sin not against it." In the sacking of a town, in one of the old bloodthirsty wars, a soldier seized a little child, and was about to kill him in very wickedness when the little one cried out, "O sir, don't kill me, sir, I am so little." The appeal saved his life; for the same reason hurt not your child or teach it evil; it is so little, and it is so trustful, that it is treason to lead it astray. Be careful how you behave towards a soul which reposes in you so implicitly; do not sin against the child. It is your own; you gave it birth; you see your own features in its smiling face; will you lead your own child to hell? Will you be the destroyer of your own offspring? You love it; your heart overflows with affection for your child; let divine grace turn the streams of affection in the channel of

wisdom that the immortal nature of your child may receive the benefit.

Experience adds its voice to nature, "Do not sin against the child." Hundreds of parents have been brought with sorrow to the grave through the natural result of their own failures and trespasses in reference to their children. They taught the lesson of sin, and the children having learned it, practiced it upon their parents; if you would not stuff your pillow with thorns, do not sin against the child! Experience teaches us, too, from its brighter side, the excellence of holy behavior in the household. How often parents have had the reward of well educating their children; how the father has leaned, when he has grown weak upon the son's strong shoulder, and the mother has found her dearest comfort upon earth in the daughter whom she had trained for Christ! Experience says for your own sakes, lest you nurse an adder into your bosom, sin not against the child! And for your own sake that as arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so may your sons and daughters be in later life. Sin not against the child!

Conscience repeats the same advice. That inward monitor ceases not to remind us of what is due to God, and to His peculiar charge, the weak and feeble. Conscience tells us plainly that we must not sport with responsibilities so vast. "Take this child and nurse it for me," said the daughter of Pharaoh to Moses' mother, "and I will give you your wages." And even so every babe that is cast into our lap by providence is put there for the same reason—that we may train it for God, and obtain a reward of divine grace at the last.

The church adds her voice to that of conscience. "Do not sin against the child," for the children are the church's hope; bring them to Christ that He may put His hands upon them and bless them, that they may become the future teachers and preachers, the pillars and defense of Christ's church below. Though some of

us have lived but a few years in this world, we have lived long enough to see some of our most esteemed non-conforming families seduced by various motives into communion with the world's religion, and the world's church. The mystery is not at all difficult to solve. The parents grew rich, and though they were still *among* us, they were not *of* us; pride separated them in spirit, and their sons and daughters were introduced into a society that could not be found among the humbler followers of Jesus; to such fashionable company they became united, and now the descendants of Dissenters are among the fiercest revilers of our holy faith! Better far were it for us to see our children carried to their graves as infants—to be mourned over with the resignation which a sure hope begets, than they should live to forsake the Lord God of their fathers, and to pull down what their fathers built up! That the sons of the Puritans should degenerate into Cavaliers; that the sturdy Protestant family should be led away with Puseyism; that the godly sire should be followed by a reckless son is most deplorable; but so it has been in all generations, and so it still will be, while parents sin against the child.

God himself speaking from the excellent glory, this morning, says to each one of His servants here, "Do not sin against the child," and I ask that if no other voice is heard, we may all bow before His glorious Majesty, and ask for divine grace to be willing and obedient.

III. Thirdly, having heard the message, **WHAT THEN?** Only two things.

Does not that exhortation startle some of the unconverted and unawakened here? I think if I were as you are, sir, if I had lived to be 60 years of age, and my son had died through drunkenness, or my daughter were at this time living a godless life, and I were unconverted, it would shoot a pang through my heart to think that I should have brought such misery upon

them through my neglect of divine things! A man often hesitates before he will plunge his family into the speculation which he would not shudder at himself. To be damned yourself, is something terrible—condemned of God, withered and blasted forever with His anger, cast away where hope can never come! Well, you may gird up your loins, and make your brow as brass, and say, "I will even run the risk of that, and bear the eternal, and defy the fierceness of His wrath," but can you bear to think that your seed will probably fall into the same condemnation? Eyes will peer at you through the smoke of hell, and shall recognize you—then some such words as these shall be hissed into your ears—"A curse on you, O man, the author of my miserable being, and the cause of my endless ruin! A curse on you, and a sevenfold hell on you, my sire, and on you, O woman, who gave me birth, for you trained me in the service of Satan, and everlasting destruction fell on me through you! Only inhuman wretches consign their own children to the flames; O fiends that you were to teach me the ways of vanity and irreligious; both by your example, and your precepts." Ah, sinner, this will multiply your torments! You shall be dragged down by your own children's hands to lower depths of misery! I pray you stop and think, and if you cannot redeem the mischief which you have already done, yet *repent* of it! Fly to the cross! Be saved yourself, and maybe those of your house who still are spared, may with yourself be saved. O that divine grace might lead you, like the Philippian jailor, to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" and then to hear the voice of promise, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." Oh, if my words could be as flashes of lightning! If every syllable I drop was a flame of fire, I would rejoice if thoughtless ungodly ones would but turn to God and live!

Does not this command of this morning press upon every Christian here, not alone upbraiding us, but as awakening our

laggard energies, exciting us to something more of diligence and effort? Will you not dear friends, this afternoon, pray that Mr. Hammond's words may be powerful among the throng of boys and girls? Will it not be a matter of conscience with everyone here that at home you will plead with God for a blessing? And during this week will you not maintain a gracious concert of earnest prayer that the benediction may descend like showers of gracious rain upon these young plants? Will you not give us your best help if you see any movements of God's Spirit? Will you not join to cheer, and to instruct the newborn converts? Will you not consider whether you could not take a class in one of the surrounding Sunday schools? Will you not roll away that reproach which I mentioned just now, which rests upon some of you because there are schools without teachers? Parents, will you not pray for your children, and even today seek to hold up Jesus before them? Will we not all, God helping us, say within ourselves that we will no longer sin against the child, but in Jesus' name seek to gather His lambs and feed them for Him? Amen.

841 CROWDING TO TOUCH THE SAVIOR – MARK 3:10

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Nov. 13, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At Bloomsbury Chapel

"For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him." — Mark 3:10

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Mark 3]

OUR LORD HAD BEEN persecuted, and therefore He put forth many proofs of His power. When opposition attends the gospel it will be the more triumphant: the warnings of the devil predict the success of the word.

When our Lord Jesus had done much, He was under a sacred necessity to do more, for everyone who was healed busied himself in spreading abroad the fame of the beloved Physician, and others laboring under similar infirmities hastened at once to receive the like cure. The more we do for Christ, the more we *may* do, and I think usually the more we *must* do; if we hold back from Christian labor, we may think that little is required of us, but as soon as we once enter heart and soul into the Master's service, we shall feel as if we needed a thousand hands, and a hundred lives to overtake the growing demands upon us. I gather from the case before us in the text that as it was with the Master, so will it always be with the servants. Their pace of usefulness will increase in geometrical

proportion, like that of a falling stone; healed multitudes will act as willing decoys to attract multitudes of their unhealed friends. If there are any here who have received the grace of God, it will be natural for them to induce others to listen to the word of life so they, also, may find salvation in our exalted Savior. Thus it is that the kingdom grows more and more, until the strongholds of sin are overthrown, and the gates of hell are shaken. Let us take care that we prove not an exception to this blessed rule! Never let us, by unholy silence, rob our Master of one of His best weapons, and the church of her greatest joy; you who are healed should publish abroad in every place the fame of the friend of sinners! It is your *privilege,* and your *duty*.

In calling your attention to the text, I shall notice *the parallel which actually exists, and the fuller parallel* which might be expected between the present times, and those of the text; I shall then briefly notice the *sins which prevent the parallel being carried out;* thirdly, I shall dwell a little upon *divine grace which invites us to complete the likeness;* and then, lastly, utter *some cautions which may be useful.*

I. First, the **PARALLEL** which exists at this moment between these times and the text, and which might be expected more fully to exist.

Thus it is in the text Jesus had healed many; these had informed other afflicted ones, and these afflicted ones, anxious to obtain the gift, pressed around the Savior in a mighty throng—everyone striving to touch Him, that he might obtain immediate healing. At this present time also, Jesus Christ has healed many; *spiritual* sickness is as rife today as bodily sickness was in the period of our Lord's earthly sojourn. He is at this hour, graciously occupied in healing all kinds of moral deformity and moral disease; to our knowledge some great sinners have been saved; some who were diseased with drunkenness, with dishonesty, and with lasciviousness have

believed in Christ, and have been restored to virtue, and to holiness. Surely this ought to encourage others to hope that better things are possible to them through the Savior's healing power!

The gospel has had free course in the slums of St. Giles; it has worked graciously in the mansions of Bloomsbury; the gospel has been found mighty in Bethual Green, and it has been victorious in the West End. A few have been saved of the highest in the land and not *some* only, but many of the poor in these last days have found Jesus mighty to save! Many who were lost to all spiritual things have been saved of late; during this last week many believed, and were changed in heart; every Sunday, by God's grace, souls are saved! We may not blazon it in the newspapers, nor parade the work of the Lord in magazines, but for all that, God is allowing us, week after week, to see evil men made good! We can assure you that those of us who are pastors, and watch for souls, constantly see Jesus at His gracious work with sin-sick souls; He is today healing men of the maladies of their souls.

Those whom Jesus has healed have been most thoroughly and effectually restored. The drunkard has not merely been reclaimed for a time, but he has become throughout life a sober, excellent citizen; the depraved and the debased have not been lifted up into a transient hypocritical profession of a religion which they did not understand, but we confidently testify that they have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus, and are now among the most honorable members of society. Looking back upon our own observation during a course of years, those of us who are occupied in preaching the gospel earnestly bear witness that in these degenerate times, as men usually call them, Jesus Christ, exalted in the highest heavens, is still delivering men from spiritual infirmities, saving them from gross vices, and inveterate habits!

So far the parallel exists, and it would be natural to expect to see it completed. Since many diseased in soul have been healed, it might be reckoned that great multitudes of men would *desire* to be saved, too; there are crowds of sick folk in every direction; there are many here this morning who are spiritually sick; they have eyes that see not God, hearts that throb not with love to Him, knees that bow not in earnest prayer, hands withered for all holy service, consciences seared, judgments unbalanced, imaginations perverse; all around us spiritual sicknesses of one kind or another meets our eyes. Even this house of God is crowded with diseased souls like a huge hospital. As for the great outlying population who fear not God, what a scene of plague meets the spiritual eye! What pestilence stalks in public! What disease festers in private! Soul sickness being thus prevalent, and Jesus being still engaged in healing, how is it that the sick folk do not throng to Him? How is it that every house in which Christ is preached is not crowded to the doors? Why do not men struggle and thrust one another to hear the glad tidings of redemption from their sins? How is it that they are not earnestly engaged in prayer? One would have thought that every house would have had its sighs, its tears, its groans until Christ should reveal Himself, and the inhabitants should be healed. One would have expected to find whole families engaged in supplications, even to the neglect of worldly business, for a time, until their souls were healed! Men lie awhile with bodily sickness, why not with soul sickness? We might have imagined that as we walked the streets, men would run after us crying, "brothers and sisters, what must we do to be saved?" The need of healing is great! The Physician is *present*—how is it that men sleep on, and neglect gracious opportunities which concern their eternal destinies? The parallel is not carried out; men care nothing about the word of their salvation. If they hear it, they forget it; if some of them

remember it, they do not practice it; if, for a while, they practice it, their goodness is "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew." The mass of mankind are content to be *spiritually* blind, and halt, and maimed, and talk as if their wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores were marks of honor and ensigns of health!

Now, this would not be wondered at if there were reasonable doubts as to whether Jesus did really heal the souls of men—but there is no doubt in the minds of those who have watched the various cases. Some of us have, ourselves, been healed, and therefore speak from assured experience. Here stands a man before you who by the space of five years was secretly bowed down with despondency and depression of spirits of an unusual sort; one whose life was spent at the very gates of hell through sorrow of heart when but a youth! Yet in one moment he was lifted into perfect peace—a peace which he would not change with any man beneath the stars; and all that by a simple *looking* to Him who was Crucified upon the cross! That one form of healing is a type of others, for all other evils are overcome in the same manner. Jesus can heal you of your pride; He can deliver you from anger; He can cure you of sluggishness; He can purge you from envy, from lasciviousness, from malice, from gluttony—from every form of spiritual malady! And this He can do, not by the torturing processes of penance, or the exhausting labors of superstitious performance, or the fiery ordeals of suffering, but the method is simply a *word from Him,* and a *look from you*—and all is done! You have but to *trust* in Jesus, and you are saved! Saved this morning; made a new creature in an instant; set on your feet again to start upon a new life, with a new power within you which shall conquer sin! We who bear this testimony claim to be believed; we are not liars. Not even for God's honor would we palm a pious fraud upon you, for we have felt in ourselves the healing power of Christ! We have seen it, and do see it every day, in the cases

of others, in persons of all ranks, and of all ages. All who have obeyed the word of Jesus have been made new creatures by His power! It is not one or two of us who bear this witness; there are hundreds who certify to the same fact; not of ministers alone, but of other professions, and callings. There are tradesmen here! There are gentlemen here! There are working men here! There are persons high and low here, who could, if this were fitting, rise and say, "We, too, are witnesses that Christ can heal the soul."

Here, then, is the marvel—that those who know this do not immediately throng to Christ to obtain the same blessing! It is strange, it is passing strange, it is unbelievable! The course of those of whom we read in the text was a rational one; they heard that Christ had healed many, and the true practical logic was, "Let us be healed, too! Where is He? Let us reach Him! Are there crowds about Him? Let us jostle one another; let us force our way into the mass until we touch Him, and feel the healing virtue flowing forth from Him." But men seem to have taken leave of their reason now; even though they know that the blessing is to be had—an eternal blessing not to be weighed with gold, nor compared with diamonds— yet they turn their backs upon it! Selfishness usually attracts men to places where good things are to be had, but here is the chief of all good—the possession of a sound soul, the gaining of a new nature which will fit a man to be a partaker with angels of light in glory; to be had, and to be had *freely*, yet man, untrue to himself, not even letting a right-minded selfishness govern him, turns away from the fountain of all goodness, and goes his way into the wilderness to perish of eternal thirst!

II. Secondly, and very solemnly, **WHAT ARE THE SINS WHICH PREVENT THE CARRYING OUT OF THIS PARALLEL?**

Painful is it to remember that one of the first sins which prevent men from pressing and thronging to touch Christ is

ignorance; the sin of willful ignorance—not knowing what they might know, not knowing in very truth what they have learned in theory. My dear hearers, many of you this morning are unconverted. You are just what you always were—men diseased by sin; you know that Christ is healing souls, and yet you have no desire to be healed, or the desire does not lead you practically to press to Him for the blessing. I say one cause of this is your ignorance. You do not *know* your disease; you do not *know* the true meaning of these three letters—S, I, N. If I were to put you through a few questions, you would admit the truth that you are sinners, but you do not know the meaning of your own confession! You would confess that you were born in sin, but then the true meaning of sin has never occurred to you, and the confession is, therefore, good for nothing. If I were to read the bottom of your soul, I should discover deeply engraved there the belief that you are not very guilty, and that all your sins put together amount to nothing very serious. If you had indulged in some gross external act of iniquity, you might, perhaps, have perceived its vileness; but you do not see any particular heinousness in those commonplace transgressions into which you have fallen, and you are quite ignorant of the evil which lies hidden within them. You are at rest though God is angry with you! You remain at ease though you bear an unclean disease about you which will shut you out of paradise! If a man were quite sure that he had a cancer in his breast, and knew that a medicine was to be found which would heal it, if he did not seek the medicine, you would feel confident that he did not know what a cancer meant. So is it with you. You do not know what sin means; you do not know that the smallest sin is the beginning of hell, a spark of the infernal fire, the first cause of that unutterable torment, the smoke of which goes up forever and ever! O poor souls, to be so ignorant, where not to know is to be forever undone! May God's eternal

Spirit shine like the sun into your dark spirit, and reveal yourself to yourself! If I might pray one prevailing prayer for every unconverted one here this morning, it should be this, "Lord, make them to know their present state, and to tremble at it." Oh, if you did but know your danger, and knew the sweetness and efficacy of the remedy; if you did but know the punishment which is coming—and the blessedness of escaping from it, you would be among the first to press and throng about the Savior to obtain healing from Him. But ignorance holds many back.

Akin to ignorance is *insensibility*. Many men know, but do not feel. The mass of our hearers, the unconverted, I mean, have but very little feeling. Indeed, *spiritually* they have none at all, for they are "dead in trespasses and sins." You may stab a dead man in a thousand places, but he will not cry out. So is it with ungodly men; you may tell them of the love of Christ, the story of which might surely melt a rock, and make a stone dissolve, and if they feel any emotion, it is but for a moment—a little superficial feeling, no sooner begun than ended, and they go their way to forget it all. The love of the bleeding Immanuel is an idle tale to them. Then the preacher may bid Sinai thunder with all its mighty peals. God Himself may be heard in judgments loud and terrible! But, while the forests bow, and the boulders are split, the hardened heart remains unmoved! Defiance is hurled by unbelief against Omnipotence itself! In vain we talk of the terrors of God, and the judgment to come; in vain we poor preachers endeavor to convey our warning messages in the most affectionate and pathetic terms; charm we ever so wisely, the deaf adder will not hear! And we go back to our Master, and lament, "Who has believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" An awful insensibility has stolen over the natural heart of man, and therefore it is that though poisoned through and through with the venom of sin, with Jesus waiting to heal, men crowd not to find the remedy.

In addition to this insensibility, there grows over unrenewed hearers of the gospel a sad *indifference* about it all. I do not hear them speak out this indifference *openly*, but they might as well do it, for they really feel it. There is this kind of indifference—"Well, well, why make so much to do about it? If I am to be saved, I shall be saved; these things will happen in due time; meanwhile, why make so much fuss about the soul? Our souls do not pay as a present investment, and we do very well with them as they are; we are at the desk from Monday to Saturday; we are in the shop or in the exchange all day long; really, a man must look to the main chance, and mind his business, or else nowadays he will soon go to the wall." There is a tacit persuasion among men that the soul does not matter, although few men would have the hardihood to say as much. Yet he who soberly calculates, cannot but know that the soul is of the utmost consequence, for as the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment, so must the soul be more precious than the body—especially viewing it in the light of *immortality*. "What can it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" When that funeral bell begins to toll, what use shall it be to a man that he was learned and famous; that he made so much money, and died, as men say worth so many thousands? How can his wealth serve him if his *soul*, in all its naked deformity, is bound to stand before its God, its wounds unhealed, its filth unwashed, covered from head to foot with the loathsomeness of its sin? To hear the Judge say, "Get away from here! You have no portion with the blessed, you are sick unto death! Get you to the abode of the unclean forever," will be the everlasting death-knell of all hope! O sirs, you will then wish that you had given up the entire world to have found Christ! You will then curse yourselves that you spent your lives in gaining an infinite loss, and hoarded and scraped up mere smoke and ashes! How you will mourn that

you gave your minds to things which are not bread, and your labor for that which profits not while you allowed your soul's weightiest affairs to go by default! Indifferent we may be now, but it will be hard to be so indifferent on a dying bed! It will be impossible to be so before the bar of God! Here we may place earth first, but when we come to die we shall find all mortal things recede. After death what a speck will earth appear; time's fleeting concerns will have vanished from our thoughts except as they linger in our regrets, and add fiercer pangs to our pains. Oh, I pray you give your thoughts to *heaven,* for your immortal natures demand this of you! Pause awhile! Be sober! Give scope and room to sound judgment! Trifle not with eternity! If you must forget any part of your manhood, let it be the part which shall so soon be worm's meat, and melt back to mother earth! But O, rob not your souls; defraud not your spirits; be not indifferent to your own best welfare!

Men press not to Christ as we expect they should because they *procrastinate*. Delay is Satan's great net! All men *mean* to repent; alas, they will regret one day that they did not repent at once! Most men *intend* to believe in Jesus, but they put off believing till there will be no Savior in whom to trust; it is always *tomorrow* with men. Archias, the Grecian ruler, was met one night by a friendly messenger who brought a communication informing him that he was to be assassinated at a feast. Archias, being in a merry mood, would not read the letter just then; why should he, as he was going to a banquet? "But," said the messenger, "it contains serious things"; "Well, well," said Archias, "serious things tomorrow." He died bearing about him the message which would have saved his life if he had read it! Thousands are saying, "Serious things tomorrow!" and so they die; and what is more, they are damned bearing the warning about them which was meant to awaken them! Why will men thus go blindfolded to destruction? God

forgive some of you for having delayed so long, and may you be moved by His eternal love to persevere no longer in such a course! Hear, I beseech you, the word which says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Today is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation!"

There is another reason men come not to Christ to seek healing for their souls—because they really *love the disease!* It is a part of the madness of sin, and the folly of iniquity that it fascinates men into a love of itself; if men did not love unrighteousness, they would not be unrighteous! If men did not love in their hearts disobedience to God, and the pleasures of the flesh, they would no longer be disobedient, but would yield to God at once; when we have to deal with sinners about their souls, there is this difficulty—that instead of desiring to be saved, with many of them, this is the *last* thing they would wish for. If to be saved meant to be delivered from going down to hell, they would like that well enough, but since it means something more, namely, being saved from their *sins*, saved from being any longer slaves to their *lusts*, they care not for such a salvation! They would rather be spiritually crooked, blind, and lame; they do not desire the holy sanity of spiritual manhood; they would rather bear about them the deformity of sin because their perverted minds have gathered a taste for that which destroys them! They perceive, or think they do, the light of God in that which is darkness, and sweetness in that which is bitter! Will not the drunk take the cup at all hazards? Ah, have I not seen him poison himself willfully with his excess? When year after year he has undermined his constitution, and is at death's door, will he not grieve, and even shed tears if from poverty, sent in mercy to him, he is unable to get that drink which is ruining him? And will not men who have given way to their passions, when they know that mischief will follow—when they have already smarted from it, go on in sin like the sheep

which follows the butcher to the very slaughter? Oh the madness, the raving madness of men! The basilisk eyes of the old serpent enchant poor foolish humanity so that it sits still to be devoured, and has no will to escape; men hug their chains, and kiss their fetters; they talk of happiness when they are standing over the mouth of hell, and in a few short months or days will fall into the devouring fire! Madness reigns in the human heart! O God, remove it! Remove it from each one of my hearers this morning that not one may choose his own delusions, and select for himself a course which must inevitably end in unmeasured misery!

Thus I have tried, as best I could, to point out the sins which prevent men from thronging to Christ. But I feel that I speak too coldly upon a theme which charms my heart, and I fear you listen to this matter, you unconverted ones, as though it were of no great concern to you; when oh, within the next hour or two, it may receive an importance which you have not dreamed of! Poor dying creatures that we are, at our very longest so short-lived, and so apt to be caught away in a moment, how is it that we can sport and trifle with the things which concern us more than all else beside? What are houses and lands? What are stocks and exchanges? What are all our belongings? What, even, the body itself—these eyes, and hands, and this tongue, compared with the soul which is our essential self, our very being? If our souls are unsound; if our spirits are rotting with the disease of sin; if we are therefore as lepers shut out from heaven, and God forever, oh, misery of miseries—what can make up for this if it were but for an hour? But when it is for *eternity*, and the soul is lost *forever*, what can compensate? Ah, dear hearers, run not the risk, but crowd to the Savior today, who is so willing to receive you right now!

III. This brings me, in the third place, to notice **THE GRACE WHICH INVITES** us, this morning, to complete the parallel of the text.

Christ is healing souls; divine grace invites us to do as the text says, namely, to press upon Him to touch Him, as many of us as have afflictions. Think, now, what facts invite you to come to Christ; in the first place, dear hearers, you are spared in this world, and with some of you this is no small wonder! You have passed, it may be, through great perils; you were sick of the fever; you were laid low with cholera; you have been in shipwreck; you have escaped from a calamitous fire. You have been in eminent peril many and many a time; it is a wonder to all who know you that you are alive, and it is most of all a wonder to yourself! Account that the long-suffering of God is salvation, and is meant to lead you to repentance! He has spared you that you might not die until you have found His mercy! Thus His eternal mandate runs—"Spare that man till he has yielded Me his heart, for I have loved him with an everlasting love, and I will not allow death and hell to take him; he is Mine, and he shall live till he repents." Is it not so? May not God have sent me here this morning to tell you that it is so? You have been allowed to live where others have perished, because God has a special regard for you! I talked with one some years ago who rode in the charge of Balaclava, when the shots were emptying the saddles all around; as in obedience to orders, the troops were galloping on to death's mouth; I could not but look upon him with awe, hoping that he was one for whom God had a peculiar regard. Now, you aged men who have been spared till now, your companions have fallen on the right hand, and on the left; how death has emptied the saddles of those around you; those who kept shop in the same street; those who went to school with you. Your playmates, your relatives, your brothers, your cousins—they are nearly all gone, and you are

here! Why are you here? Why, I think, to say this morning, "I will arise, and go unto my Father; I will tell Him I have sinned against Him; I will ask His mercy." Let the fact of your being spared induce you to seek Christ!

There is another encouragement for you in the fact that you are spared to hear the gospel. You did not always hear it, and you do not, even now, always hear it. But you are brought, this morning, to listen to one who would gladly, by the Holy Spirit's power, bring you to Christ, and who, speak as he may, desires to speak out of love to your soul. It is a great mercy that you have been permitted to hear the gospel after having so many times repelled its warnings, and forgotten its admonitions—

"Still does His good Spirit strive,
With the chief of sinners dwell."

I do not believe that the gospel has been sent into this place this morning, to be preached for nothing! I will not believe that my Master directed me to stand in this pulpit, and address you without intending that some of you should, by His Spirit's power, comply with the divine request which is so much for your own profit! The gospel is preached unto you, and God has not sent it with the intention that after you have heard it, you should seek mercy and not find it! Oh no, God does not tantalize! He does not mock the sons of men! He bids you come to Him, repent and believe, and you shall be saved! If you come with a broken heart, trusting in Christ, there is no fear that He will reject you—else He would not have sent the gospel to you! Beloved, there is nothing that so delights Jesus Christ as to save sinners; I never find that He was in a huff because they pressed about Him to touch Him; no, but it gave Him divine pleasure to give forth His healing power. You who are

in trade are never happier than when business is brisk, and my Lord Jesus, who follows the trade of soul-winning, is never happier than when His great business is moving on rapidly! What pleasure it gives a physician when at last he brings a person through a severe illness into health! I think the medical profession must be one of the happiest engagements in the world when a man is skillful in it.

Our Lord Jesus feels a most divine pleasure as He bends over a broken heart and binds it up! It is the very heaven of Christ's soul to be doing good to the sons of men! You misjudge Him if you think He wants to be argued with, and persuaded to have mercy! He gives it as freely as the sun pours forth light, as the heavens drop with dew, and as clouds yield their rain. It is His honor to bless sinners; it makes Him a name, and an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. I know I once belied Him. When I felt my sins to be a great burden, I said within myself, "I will go to Jesus, but perhaps He will reject me." I thought I had much to *feel,* and to *do* to make myself ready for Him, and I therefore did this and that— but the more I did, the worse I became! I was like the woman who spent her money on physicians, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse. At last I found it was of no use, and when I fully understood that there was life in a *look* at Christ—that all which was needed was for me simply to *trust*, to come as I was, and put my case into His dear pierced hands, and leave it there—I could not think it could be so! It seemed so simple—how could it be true? Was that all? I thought when I came to Him, He would say to me, "Sinner, you have rejected Me so long; you have mocked Me by saying prayers which you did not feel; you have been a hypocrite, and joined with God's people in singing My praises when you did not praise Me in your heart." I thought He would chide me, and bring 10,000 sins to my remembrance! Instead of that, it was but a word, and it was all

done! I *looked* to Him, and the burden was gone! I could have sung, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord with pardon in His right hand, and acceptance in His left, with abundant blessings to the least deserving of the sons of men." Now, my dear hearers, I have to tell you that Jesus Christ abides in the same ability to save as He had in the days of His flesh. He always lives to make intercession for sinners, and is therefore, able to save to the uttermost them who come to Him; and it is still true that he who comes He will in no wise cast out. There has never been an instance of a man who trusted Christ, and perished, and there never shall be an instance! Murderers have tried it, and blood-red murder has been washed out by the crimson blood of Jesus! Harlots have tried it, and have sat at the feet of Jesus, and washed them with their tears for very joy! Thieves have tried it! The adulterer, the whoremonger, the most debauched and depraved have come to the cross, and have obtained divine mercy through the precious blood of my Master! None are excluded who desire to come, and who sincerely trust in Christ to save them; I pray you, therefore, listen to our tearful invitation, and stand not back through shame or fear, for Jesus is still able and willing to save all who trust Him!

Do I need to enlarge upon this? Perhaps so, but our time fails; I know if you are insensible to your need of Jesus, and do not care about being made whole, you are not likely to come for any drawings of *mine;* but if you are awakened in any degree by the Holy Spirit, let me take hold of your hand and say, My dear friend, do not delay trusting Christ! Do not entertain a hope that it will ever be easier to trust Jesus than it is now; do not think that you will ever be in a better state for coming than you are in now; the best state in the entire world for washing is to be filthy! The best state in the entire world to obtain help from a physician is to be sorely sick! The best state for asking

alms is to be a beggar! Do not try to patch up those rags, nor improve your character, nor make yourself better before you come to Christ! Come in all your poverty, and vileness, just as you are, and say to Him, "My Lord, and my God, You suffered as a man for all the sins of all those who trust You—I trust You—accept me, give me peace and joy." And tell the world, I pray you, whether He accepts you or not! If He casts you away, you will be the very first—then let us know of it! But if He receives you, you will be but one among 10,000s who have been thus accepted—then tell all of it to the confirming of our faith!

IV. Lastly, I have one or two **CAUTIONS** to mention, which seem to me to be necessary in such a case. "He had healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him."

Our first caution is—never be content with merely *pressing* upon Christ; when there is a gracious season in a church, and persons are converted, many rest satisfied because they have been in the congregation where works of mercy have been performed. It is dreadful to reflect that we have in all our assemblies, men and women who are perfectly satisfied with having spent the Sunday in a place of worship. Now, suppose the case of a man having the leprosy who goes to the place where Jesus is; he sees the people thronging to get near, and he joins in the press; he pushes on for a certain length of time, and then he comes back perfectly content because he has joined with the crowd. The next day the great Master is dispensing healing virtue right and left, and this same man joins in the throng; he once more elbows himself tolerably near to the Savior, and then retires. "Well," he says, "I got into the crowd, I pressed and squeezed, and made my way, and so I was in the way; perhaps I might have got a blessing." Now that would be precisely similar to the condition of hundreds and thousands of people who go to a place of worship on Sunday. There is the

gospel; they come to hear it; they come next Sunday, there is the gospel again. They listen to it, and they go their way each time. "Fool!" you say to the man with the leprosy, "why, you did nothing! Getting into the crowd was nothing! If you did not *touch* the Lord who dispensed the healing, you wasted your time! And besides, you incurred responsibility because you got *near* to Him, and yet for lack of putting out your hand to touch Him, you lost the opportunity." So you good people, who come to this chapel, or go to any other place of worship where Jesus Christ is faithfully preached, you come and go, and come and go continually; and what fools you are, what gross fools to get into the throng, and to be satisfied with *that,* and never touch Christ! Don't tell me of your church goings and your chapel goings; they are not a morsel of use to you unless you touch the Savior through them! Your occupying that pew for a space of 20 years; your going to a place of worship twice every Sunday; your attendance on the weeknight—all this is only so much responsibility, but not a grain of *blessing* to you unless you really come to Jesus Christ! You are right to come to the services, just as they were right to press into the crowd, but you are wrong if you stop there—just as that leprous man would have been, had he been foolishly content to have pressed into the throng without getting near to Christ! And yet, is not this the conduct of a great many of you? It is getting serious, too; you have been chapel-goers, perhaps, for 30 or 40 years, and are you a bit the better? Your mother took you in her arms to the sanctuary; you went to Sunday school; you have always been in the way of the means of divine grace—and yet, for the lack of one thing—a real *trusting* in Christ, you are perishing in your sin! Living water flows at your feet, but you do not drink; living bread is upon the table, but you have not eaten; divine pardon is before you, and you will not put out your hand to take it! Heaven's gate is set wide open, and you are content to turn your back upon it!

I must caution you again not to be content with touching those who are *healed*. There were many in the crowd who, having touched the Master, clapped their hands and said, "Glory be to God, my withered arm is restored." "My eyes are opened." "My dropsy has vanished." "My palsy is gone." One after another, they praised God for His great wonders; and sometimes their friends who were sick would go away with them, and say, "What a mercy; let us go home together." They would hear all about it, and talk about it, and tell it to others—but all the while, though they rejoiced in the good that was done to others, and sympathized in it, they never *touched Jesus* for themselves. It is very dangerous work for some of you Sunday school teachers, when you are the means of bringing dear children to Christ, and yet do not come yourselves! Noah's carpenters built the ark, but were all drowned. Oh, I pray you, be not satisfied with *talking* about revivals, and *hearing* about conversions—get an interest in them! Let nothing content any one of us but actual spiritual *contact* with the Lord Jesus Christ! Let us never give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eyelids till we have really looked to that great sacrifice which God has lifted up for the sins of men! Let us not think of Christ as *another* man's Savior, but be passionately in earnest till we get Him for *ourselves*. If He is not ours today, today let us lay hold on Him! I cannot endure the thought of your going out of this house of prayer before you are saved! Remember, salvation work does not require months and years; if you look to Christ at this very moment, you shall have your sins as much forgiven as if you were 70 years a Christian, for there is no difference between the newborn babe in Christ, and the most advanced veteran in the Christian army. If you only look now, your sins are forgiven you, and you shall, this day, begin the new life, and God shall be glorified in that new life until He takes you up to dwell with Himself forever!

Do you know what it is to trust Christ? I do not know how to explain it better than by dwelling on the word itself—*trust*. It is a reliance, a dependence; the old divines used to call it a recumbence; it is a leaning all your weight on Christ, giving up your own power, and depending on Him. Dr. Watts puts it thus—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall!
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

But still, people will not understand us. A young man once said to me, "I want to know what I must do to be saved." I reminded him of that verse. He said, "Sir, I cannot fall." "Oh," said I, "you do not understand me; I do not mean a fall which needs any strength in you—I mean a fall caused by the absence of all strength." It is to tumble down into Christ's arms because you cannot stand upright! Faint into the arms of Christ—that is faith! Just give up *doing;* give up depending upon anything that you are, or do, or ever hope to be, and depend upon the complete merits, and finished work, and precious blood of Jesus Christ. If you do this you are saved—*anything* of your own doing spoils it all! You must not have a jot or a tittle of your own! You must give up relying upon your *prayers*, your *tears*, your *baptism*, your *repentance*—and even your *faith* itself! Your reliance is to be on nothing but that which is in Christ Jesus! Those dear hands, those blessed feet are ensigns of His love—look to them! That bleeding, martyred, murdered person is the grand display of the heart of the ever-blessed God; look to Him! Look to the Savior's pangs, griefs, and groans; these are punishments for human sin; this is God's wrath spending itself on Christ instead of spending itself on the believer. Believe in

Jesus, and it is certain that He thus suffered for you; trust in Him to save you, and you are saved! God grant you the privilege of faith, and the gift of salvation. Amen.

842 THE ANGELIC LIFE – MATT. 22:30

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Nov. 13, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." — Matthew 22:30

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Revelation 7]

WE MUST ALL OF US develop one way or the other. Manhood, as we see it here, is but the green blade, or, at the best, the corn in the ear: the full corn in the ear will only be seen in the world to come. We must either descend or ascend: none of us can remain in the position which he occupies today. Some are sliding every hour downward, descending by the force of evil habits; more and more do they become the serfs and slaves of Satan, and by consequence, more and more developed into *his* image. They can find their doom written in these words, "Depart into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil, and his angels; you followed Satan, you grew more and more like he is, and now receive the heritage appointed for him." On the other hand, he who by repentance and faith is brought into the fellowship of the gospel, receives grace upon grace; he advances from glory to glory, in a more perfect resemblance to heavenly beings, and, at the last, angels having rejoiced over his repentance—angels to whom he had become

as, carry his soul into the bosom of God! Which shall it be with you, man? Will you ripen for the golden sickle, and for the harvest-home of heaven, or will you blacken for the scythe of iron which shall mow you down to be bound up in the bundle with your fellows, and consumed as tares? It must be one or the other! O may infinite grace overcome our natural tendencies, and may we be among those who go from strength to strength until they ascend into the hill of the Lord, and are made like the angels!

Without further preface, the subject of this morning's discourse will be *in what respects the life of spirits before the throne is like that of angels;* and then, secondly, we may have, perhaps, a *few practical thoughts about the commencement of the angelic life while yet here below.*

I. First, then, **IN WHAT RESPECTS ARE THOSE SAINTS WHO HAVE PASSED THE STREAM OF DEATH LIKE THE ANGELS?**

The likeness, though it lies in many points, more or less prominently may be seen, I think, distinctly in *five particulars.*

1. The saints of God are like the angels as to the qualities of *their persons.* In one matter they always *were* alike, namely, that both angels and saints are creatures of God, and must by no means be looked upon in any higher light. A *false church* has commanded its votaries to pay religious homage to angels, contrary both to the example, and the express precept of Holy Writ; the angels are no more to be adored than saintly men, and neither the one nor the other can be worshipped without incurring the sin of idolatry! Take two parallel cases. When John, seeing an angel, taking him for his Lord, bowed down to worship him, the answer was, "See you do it not, for I am of your fellow servants, the prophets; worship God." When the heathens, at Lystra, brought forth bullocks and sheep, and were about to do sacrifice unto Paul and Barnabas as unto Mercury

and Jupiter, these holy men tore their clothes, and declared that they were men of like passions with others. Angels and holy men refuse all kinds of worship; they unanimously sing, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto the name of Jehovah be all the praise." Oh, the long-suffering of God in tolerating that *apostate* and *accursed* church which has dared to set up both saints and angels, men and women, and I know not what besides, as objects of reverence in rivalry of the Lord of Hosts!

That is but incidental, however; the saints of heaven are like the angels in their persons in the fact that sex is forever obliterated there. "They are neither married nor given in marriage"; from which I do *not* gather that so much as may be spiritual in the *feminine* character or anything that is mental in the *masculine* character will be destroyed, but that in the bodily frame all that which divided the sexes will be no more. I imagine that saints before the throne of God may, some of them, exhibit that exquisite tenderness, that heroism of affection which will indicate them to have been holy women here below, and that other spirits in their special force and vigor, courage and zeal, may reveal, even in glory, the fact that in the church militant they were among the valiant men of Israel. Why not? Yet all else that is carnal in male and female will be gone, and we shall be one in Christ Jesus, in whom there is neither male nor female. Marriage will be out of the question. This is linked with a further likeness, namely, that the spirits above are like angels in their immortality; they cannot die; such a thing as a funeral knell was never heard in heaven. No angel was ever carried to his grave—though angels have been in the sepulcher, for there sat two, at the head and the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They were *visitors*, not dwellers there; there is nothing about angels upon which the death-worm can feed; no sepulcher could encase their free spirits, and the bonds of death could not hold them for a moment. So is it with the freed ones

who have passed through the grave, and are now with Christ—they cannot die. Ages upon ages may roll on; eternity's ceaseless cycles may continue, but there shall be no gray hairs of decay upon the heads of the immortals; celestials shall never decay. For this reason, therefore, the population of yonder realms needs never to be repaired by births; *here* it is a perpetual struggle; life contending with death, death marking its universal victory, scarring the face of the earth with tombs, but life triumphant still, always sending little children to gather flowers above the graves; the flood of life, though apparently drunk up by the Behemoth of death, still rolls on, a broader and deeper torrent than before. Therefore are they like the angels in heaven, since there is no death, and consequently no necessity of birth to repair the waste of population.

We also have reason to believe that since these spirits before the throne of God are like the angels, even when the resurrection trumpet shall be sounded, and the spirits, disembodied for a time, shall be again clothed, they shall be like the angels in the fact of the maturity of their being. In heaven babies will be no longer babies; he who was a baby here shall be fully developed there; neither shall there be in heaven the weary old man tottering on his staff—he shall not carry there his failing eyes, and trembling knees; he shall be in the glory of his purified manhood, and feel no decay. The child shall be as though he were a 100 years old, and the aged man shall wear more than the honors of his youth. I read not of angels either as youthful or waxing old—they always stand in a blessed *perfection*, and so shall the saints of God always be both physically and spiritually. "You have the dew of Your youth," O Jesus, and that same dew falls upon all the plants of Your right-hand planting! We suppose, too, that all the spirits before the throne are like angels in the matter of their beauty; the disembodied saints are fair in the eyes of Jesus, even as they are,

and when their spiritual bodies shall rise all radiant with "the glory of the celestial," then shall their comeliness be seen of all.

"It is sown in dishonor," says the apostle, "it is raised in glory." Whatever of dishonor there might have been in the uncomely features of the poor creature whom we committed to the earth, there shall be no deformity to mar the countenance of the nobler thing which shall rise from the sepulcher at the bidding of God. "It does not yet appear what we shall be," but that we shall be lovely beyond expression is most certain, "for we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is." There will be a glory about risen saints which will even transcend the glory of angels, for unto them He has never said that they should be made like unto the Only-Begotten, but this is the portion of all the blood-bought and bloodwashed— that they be fashioned in the likeness of Christ when they shall see Him face to face!

As we shall resemble the angels in beauty so, no doubt we shall also equal them in strength. "Bless the Lord, you His angels that excel in strength." Thus says the apostle, "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in *power*." What kind of power that will be, we can only guess. There will be an enlarged mental capacity, a far more extensive spiritual range; as far as the new body is concerned, there will be an amount of power in it of which we have no conception; what we shall be, beloved, in the matter of strength, we cannot tell, but this we know, that we shall not need so constantly to stretch our weary frames upon the bed of rest, and to lie half our time in unconsciousness—for we shall serve Him day and night in His temple! And this indicates a degree of physical endurance to which we are now total strangers! We shall in this, also, be as the angels of God.

Just then, for a minute, let your thoughts foresee that blessed personality which shall be yours when this present age is past. You suffer today; you are today despised, and rejected; but as from yonder creeping caterpillar, or from this dried up

chrysalis, there will arise a lovely creature with wings colored like the rainbow! So from your poor groaning humanity there shall come forth a fair and lovely being! And your spirit shall cast off the slough of its natural depravity; it shall be rid of all the foulness and damage of its sojourn here below, and your whole man shall be restored a goodly fabric—a temple glorious to look upon in which God shall dwell with you, and in which you shall dwell with God!

2. Now, secondly, there will be a likeness between the angels and glorified saints in the *matter of character*. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," teaches us that angels do the will of God perfectly, cheerfully, instantly, and with the highest possible eagerness. So do those blessed spirits to whom it is given to see Jehovah's face—it is their delight to do the will of their Father who is in heaven. Whatever the Lord may charge them to do, it is their heaven to perform, for in heaven the will of the Lord is the will of His people. Here below, my brothers and sisters to will is present with us, but how to *perform* that which we would, we find not; we would be holy, but we find another law in our members warring against the law of our minds. We sigh and cry by reason of the sin that dwells in us till we say, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But angels know not what it is to be fallen; they have never fought with any temptations from within, though once assailed by the great temptation from without by which Satan and his followers fell from happiness. They carry about with them no inbred sin; they find no heavy clay to clog their celestial ardors; they have not to lament lascivious desires, or covetous cravings; they have no proud thoughts which must be cast down, no depressions of spirit, no taunts of unbelief, no motions of self-will; they serve God without a slur in their obedience; no thought of sin ever taints their soul; no syllable of evil ever falls from their holy lips; no

thought of transgression defiles their service. So is it with the saints who dwell in glory with them! They, too, are without fault before the throne of God; they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and the Spirit of God, like a refining fire, has purged out of their nature everything that is evil! They are this day as pure as God Himself in the righteousness of Christ, and in the inwrought purity which is the work of the Holy Spirit. Do you not long to be with them, if it were only for the sake of this purity? Deliverance from sin will be an escape from all sorrow, and the obtaining of perfect holiness will be the climax of delight; oh, if we could but perfectly serve God, we would make no conditions about place! Perfection in a *dungeon* would be infinitely better than the least sin in a palace! If one could be quite delivered from all evil, and it were possible that such a spirit could suffer physical pain, yet the joy of being rid of sin would make amends for all the torment that could possibly be heaped upon the body. Brothers and sisters, this portion is yours and mine! Fighting today with sin against deadly odds, and often tempted to fear that we shall be defeated, we may rest assured that we shall conquer through the blood of the Lamb! Yonder is the crown—let your faith grasp it! Persevere courageously, for all things are possible to him who believes! The most inveterate habit may be broken! The lust that overcame us yesterday shall overcome us no more if we rest in the power of the indwelling God, and in the might of the reigning Savior! Only be of good cheer, for through Jesus you shall overcome, and the crown shall be yours, world without end!

3. Thirdly, the souls of the blessed are like angels as to their *occupation.* Angels, we read, stand around the throne of God in sacred worship; they cast their crowns before the throne upon the glassy sea, and worship the Lamb forever and ever. There

is never a moment, whether earth is swathed in light, or clothed in darkness, in which the Son of God is not adored by 10,000s times 10,000s of these celestial spirits! Cherubim and seraphim veil their faces before the ever-living Son of God; His worship is their perpetual avocation. Even so is it with all those whom Christ has redeemed with blood; they, too, are forever worshipping; unto Jesus they pay their perpetual love. The elders are represented as standing before the throne with their vials full of sweet odors, and their golden harps, representing the perpetual and acceptable praises of the glorified church. Oh, how sweet worship often is on earth, but what must it be in heaven! We love our Sundays, and the place of our assembling becomes very dear to us because it is no other than the house of God to our souls; but oh, to worship *perfectly*, without distracting thoughts, and wandering minds—how blessed will it be!

Angels are described in Scripture as being occupied in holy song. John heard the voice of an innumerable company of angels; they join in the strain which goes up before the throne, ascribing honor, and glory and majesty to the Lamb once slain; in this same chorus the glorified spirits eagerly unite— and even sweeter is their note, for angels cannot praise the Lord Jesus for having washed them in His blood, and this is the loudest of all the notes! The blood-washed contribute peculiar richness to the strain, as their joyous hearts lift up the chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb! For He was slain, and has redeemed us unto God by His blood! The Lord shall reign forever and ever." Oh, that heavenly song! Would that some stray notes would visit my ears even now, that I might learn how to speak thereof! Hear what John says of it: "And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung, as it were, a new song before the throne, and before

the four beasts." Glory be unto Christ today! Though we cannot join in the seraphic song as we would desire, we send up our contribution of heartfelt praise to Him who lives and was slain.

In addition to adoration and praise, we have much reason to believe that angels spend their existence in a wondering study of the ways of God, especially of God's gracious acts. "These things," said the apostle, "the angels desired to look into." That they are not *perfect* in knowledge is quite certain, for "of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven." They are continually *increasing* in knowledge, and it appears from the book of Daniel that they ask questions, and long to be instructed. That vision which Jacob saw, in which the angels of God were ascending and descending upon the ladder, pictures to us the contemplations of divine spirits who are ascending and descending in meditation upon Jesus; studying the glories of the incarnate God—His descending into the tomb, and His triumphant ascent to His Father's throne. Their contemplations are constantly hovering about the cross, and the doings of the incarnate God. Such, surely, will be the occupation of the blessed. The difficulties today which stagger us will be explained to us in heaven. "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter." Mysteries too deep for our present plumb-line will yield up their treasure to us in another state, for here we know in part, but there shall we know even as we are known. Truths but dimly guessed at and perceived in shadow, shall be seen in clearer light—"for now we see but as in a glass darkly, but then face to face." Scholars in Christ, how you will grow in knowledge there! You loving students of the inspired pages, how you will revel in divine teachings there! The best of commentaries shall be the author's own explanation; He who wrote the Scriptures shall be with you, and you shall ask Him,

"What did You mean by this dark saying?" Or perhaps we shall get altogether beyond the letter, and need no more the words and sentences, but shall feed on the opened Spirit, the celestial *meaning* of the heart of God! Certainly we shall be like the angels, since our studies will be all absorbed in devout and divine things.

The angels of heaven gaze upon the face of God! This is a Scriptural expression, not mine, for our Lord says that, "in heaven there angels do always behold the face of your Father, who is in heaven." And what must that be? Brothers and sisters, you are not to give a carnal meaning to these words, as though God could be seen with eyes either angelic or human, for He is not to be seen with these dull optics—God is a Spirit, and spirits, only, discern God by *thought and mental apprehension.* But what an apprehension of God that must be which is intended by the expression, "They do always behold the face of God!" Moses, the master spirit of the old dispensation, asked to see God, but he was only indulged with a sight of what our version calls His back parts, but which should more fittingly be described as the flowing train, the skirts of the Almighty's splendor; this was all he could see, though his eyes were more strengthened than that of any man under the legal dispensation. But, brothers and sisters, we in heaven, like the angels, shall see His face, and His name shall be on our foreheads—

"Father of Jesus, love's reward,
What raptures will it be,
Prostrate before Your throne to lie,
And ever gaze on Thee!"

We have still not exhausted the *occupations* of the angels. These which I have already mentioned are rather contemplative—worship, song, study, and beatific vision; but

the flaming ones above have occupations which are connected with earth. For instance, they *feel sympathetic joy*. We would not have known this if Jesus had not said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." I believe this, that the souls of men redeemed will have the same kind of joy, and I can imagine the soul of the believer rejoicing over the child who was left unconverted, saved after its parent's ascent into heaven—saved through the prayers which a mother left behind her, bequeathing them upon her dying bed as her best and most sacred legacy! Many fathers have seen their posthumous spiritual children born to them through prayers they offered on earth, but not fulfilled until after the prayer had been exchanged for praise. I sometimes think—it may be fancy, that if in glory I ever shall withdraw my eyes from the sight of my Lord, if ever I may pause the song to my Well-Beloved for a moment, it shall be to gaze over the battlements of heaven, to see how the church on earth among which I labored may be prospering! Surely those venerated men who before ministered to this flock, must feel a peculiar joy in our prosperity, and as the news is telegraphed from earth to heaven that hundreds have been born to God, and that the word among us has been quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword—if the angels rejoice, I cannot believe but what the glorified spirits, far more akin to repenting sinners than angels are—must have a yet deeper sympathy, and feel a yet more exultant mirth!

Still, I must pass on. Angels are engaged in heaven, we are told, in untiring service. Gabriel flies, at his Lord's word, whether it is to Mary, or to the shepherds, or to the King; it matters nothing to the angel whether he descends to smite the hosts of Sennacherib, or to be the guardian of a little child; it has been well said that if two angels were dispatched to earth, and the one were to rule an empire amidst all terrestrial

splendor, and the other were to perform the drudgery of a kitchen servant, the angels would have no choice as long as they knew their Lord's mind; whichever God wills, they will, for those bright spirits consider not themselves, but only the good pleasure of their God! We little know what they do for us. There is a wondrous guardianship exercised secretly by them over all the royal seed of heaven; they are always engaged; they are never idle; they are never to be found where Satan offers mischief for idle spirits to perform—but day without night they serve their God.

Lastly on this point, they are constant attendants at the courts of heaven. Wherever Jesus is, we have the angels round about Him; "When He shall come, in the glory of His Father, with all His holy angels with Him." When the prince moves, the courtiers go with the king; wherever the king may be, there are the gentlemen-at-arms, there are his bodyguards. So, wherever King Jesus is, there are His angels. "The chariots of God are 20,000, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them." The great King immortal and eternal, who girds His sword upon His thigh, and rides out to battle, goes not forth alone— legions of angels follow at His feet; when He makes war against the devil and his angels, all these, His watchers and holy ones—the flaming cherubim and fiery seraphim, are at His right hand, like veteran bands. Such shall be the engagements of each glorified soul; we know not what may be our sacred tasks in yonder skies—it were vain for us to surmise, but we shall not be idle, for it is written, "They serve Him day and night in His temple." I have thought that as angels are but the servants, they are sent out of doors to do the Master's field-work in the far-off portions of the universe. But we, who are His children, shall serve Him day and night in His temple at home—for is it not written, "They shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever"? Ours shall be housework, home service in

His immediate presence; we shall be like that angel who stood in the sun—we shall dwell forever in the full blaze of the presence of the infinite God! We shall be equal to the angels, and made like they, then, in the respect of *occupation*, as well as in that of *character*, and *person*.

4. Lest I weary you, I will add but a few words on the fourth point, though I think it a very important one. We shall be like the angels in *heavenliness*. Here we come to the vital meaning of the text. They are not married or given in marriage; they have other things to think of, and they have other cares, and other enjoyments; they mind not earthly things, but are of a heavenly spirit. So is it with the blessed spirits before the throne of God. To eat and drink, to be clothed—these are things which fret their minds no more; to keep the house, to maintain the children, to thrust the wolf from the door—such anxieties never trouble celestial spirits! Brothers and sisters, this is one of the things which makes the great change so desirable to us—that after death our thoughts, our cares, our position, our desires, our joys will all be in God! Here we want *externals,* here we seek after carnal things, for we must eat and drink, and be clothed and housed; here we must be somewhat hampered by the grosser elements of this poor materialism, but up yonder they have no needs like our own. They consequently have no desires of an earthly kind—their desires are all concerning their *God;* no creature drags them downward; they are free to bow before the Creator, and to think alone of Him, to—

> "Plunge into the Godhead's deepest sea,
> And bathe in His immensity."

Oh, what a deliverance that must be! Because if now for a minute or two we soar to more sublime things, and climb as upon the top of Pisgah to look down upon the world, we are

called to descend again into the valley, and the noise and dust of the battle; but there, forever and ever we shall abide in the loftiness of heavenly things, absorbed with the glory which shall then be revealed!

5. Lastly, we shall be like the angels when in heaven, as to our *happiness*. The bliss of angels and the glorified is complete; they possess always the divine approval; this is a fountain of joy. They know they have complete security; this is another well-spring of peace, and they have suitable engagements with which to occupy their existence; and this is a wellhead of happiness. They have unbroken rest—yes, their *service* is rest, and rest is *bliss*. They have great capacities for knowing, and understanding, and enjoying, and an enlarged capacity, well filled with so grand a subject, guarantees perpetual felicity! We shall be such! My words would utterly fail, and therefore I shall not attempt to describe the bliss of heaven. Whatever it may be, it will be ours if we are believers; least of all the family, yet believing in the precious blood, it is yours! It is not of some, but of all it is said, "They are as the angels of God in heaven." Now, unhappily for me, my time is nearly gone, and I wanted to enlarge upon the second head. The subject is too large for a single sermon. I must, therefore, give you an outline of what might have been said of the second part.

II. I would speak of **THE ANGELIC LIFE ON EARTH**.

If we are to be like the angels of God in heaven, it will be well to have an outline of it here—to give ourselves to the commencement of angelic life even here. We ought to do so. Our Lord is called an angel; He is the angel of the covenant—we ought to be like He now, and therefore we ought to have a present resemblance to angels. Ministers are especially called to this, for this is one of their names. John writes to the *angels* of the seven churches. Ministers are the messengers of God to the sons of men; they should be like that angel who flew in the

midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach to every creature! And as the angel sounded that trumpet, so as often as the time comes, and the assembly is gathered together, the Christian minister should have his trumpet ready, and that trumpet should give no uncertain sound! That we may be like angels here below is a certain fact, for we read of Stephen, that his face shone, and even they who stoned him saw him as an angel of God. Why should we not be like angels, for did not men in the wilderness eat angels' food, and may we not spiritually live on angels' meat today? May we not sing—

"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace, and dying love"?

Yet these are the daily meat, and the daily drink of all the saved souls!

We can be like angels in our occupations; first, it is ours, as it was theirs, to declare the *word of God*. We read of the word published by angels; we read of the angels flying through the midst of heaven with the everlasting gospel. My brothers, according to your ability, be like the angels of God in this, and publish abroad the plan of salvation! Each of you, according to his ability, tell others of the salvation of Jesus Christ; you will never be more angelic than when God makes you the messengers of His Holy Spirit to the hearts of men.

Be it ours to imitate the angels in fighting a good fight while we are here; we read that Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels, and the dragon was cast down. The fight is going on every day. Michael is the Lord Jesus, the only Archangel; we, like He, and under Him, must stand as champions for the truth of God, never to surrender, but being prepared to suffer, even unto blood, striving against sin! With undaunted courage, and a conscience that cannot be violated,

let us stand fast for the one Lord, the one faith, and the one baptism until He shall come who shall call us to the reckoning, and shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servants." Like angels then, let us teach, and like angels, fight for the cause and for the crown of Christ!

Ours, too, let it be like angels, to oppose the way of rebels. When Balaam was on his road to attempt to curse Israel, an angel stood with a fiery sword, and made him pause; how often may a good man do that with the ungodly? Wicked men have frequently felt in the presence of gracious spirits, that they could not speak profanely, nor sin desperately; a good man's presence has cast awe over the whole company. You ought, by your example, to say to the world, "Rebel not against God." Even if you speak not with your tongue, the eloquence of your *life* should be a constant check upon the pathways of sin.

Not content with this, let it be ours to be the means of *setting free those who are the prisoners of hope*—God's prisoners. The angel came to Peter, smote him on the side, knocked off his chains, opened the gate, and led him out into the street. May you and I do this to some of those who under conviction of sin, are smarting and suffering, but have no liberty. Go today, if you have opportunity, and try to strike some sleeper on the side, and speak an earnest word; say to him, "Why do you sleep, with death and judgment so near?" And when you see him awakened, bid him follow you, as you shall open door after door of gracious promises to him, and bring him into the wide street of liberty in Christ by simple faith. You can all be angels of this kind; it needs not that you be preachers! If you find out the disconsolate, you may bring them to Jesus in the house as well as in the great assembly.

And, then, beloved, let us also imitate the angels in our ministering comfort to those who are saved. When Elijah was faint under the juniper tree, an angel appeared to him, and

pointed to a cake that was baked upon the coals. An angel said to Paul when he was on shipboard, "Fear not." Often have angels visited godly men with this message, "Fear not." O you who love the Lord, and are happy in Him, yourselves, be angels in this—comfort others with the same comfort with which God has comforted you this day! This very day there may be sitting near you some weeping Hannah who needs a message from God which can only come to her poor broken heart through your lips. Tell others of the goodness of God, as shown in your experience; bear your witness to the goodness, and loving-kindness of the Shepherd who fails not His flock, and in this way you shall be angels of mercy to tens of thousands if the Lord spares you, and gives you opportunity!

We may imitate angels in another respect—namely that we may always be watching over souls. You Sunday school teachers ought always to be angels; do we not read of the little ones whom Christ took into His arms and said, "See that you despise not one of these little ones, for in heaven their angels do always behold the face of God"? Sunday school teachers, this is your mission, see that you act it out! Angels bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone; "for the angel of the Lord encamps round about them who fear Him." Believers, learn to camp round about your fellow Christians! Help save them from temptation and sorrow! Bear up in your hands of sympathy, such as you can assist; take away the stumbling block from the way of any who are apt to fall; bear them up in your hands lest they dash their feet against a stone! You can thus be angels of God here below.

In addition to all this, is it not written, "Bless the Lord, you His angels"? "Let all the angels of God worship Him"? Well, then, you can be like the angels right now by being always in a state of praise; let no murmur escape your lips! Let no complaining dwell in your heart! Praise God though the sun

shines not! Praise Him though the mists and fog are thickening! Praise Him though the winds should howl, and the rain descends! You are not to be ruled by circumstances! Angels praise Him in the night as well as in the day! Let us do the same!—

"Praise Him while He lends you breath,
And when your voice is lost in death,
Let praise employ your nobler powers."

Thus have I set before you the attainments to which we shall come, and the opportunities we have, even now, by the Holy Spirit's effectual power of forestalling those attainments. May you be desirous of beginning the angelic life! And remember, the door to it is at Christ's cross; go where angels gaze with wonder, and you gaze with repentance; go with your eyes full of tears for sin, and trust in Him who died for sinners, and the Lord of angels shall be your Lord, and the palace of angels shall be your home forever and ever. Amen.

843 EFFECTUAL CALLING – ILLUSTRATED BY THE CALL OF ABRAM – GEN. 12:5

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Nov. 29, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came." — Genesis 12:5

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Genesis 11:27-32; 12]

IF YOU DESIRE to know the character or a child, you will probably learn much about it from observing the father. The young bird flies and sings as its father did before it. If we would know the life of the child of faith, we should study the history of the "father of the faithful." Abraham, the man of faith, is a type of all believing men, and the narrative of his life, if rightly considered, is the mirror of the history of all the saints of God. The commencement of his career of faith, when he first became separated from his own country and went into the land of Canaan, is a most instructive representation of our effectual calling, when we are, by a work of omnipotent grace, separated from the world, and made to obey the great precept, "Come you out from among them, be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." The life of the believer is as Abram's was, a separated life, a life regulated by other affections than those which arise from the relationships

of flesh and blood, a life of walking in the unseen, in which God's command, presence, and approval are paramount considerations; it is a life in which faith guides the soul, sitting like a pilot at the helm of the vessel. Abram denied the flesh, took up the cross, went outside the camp, became sanctified unto the Lord, and lived and died the friend of God, and a stranger among men. The commencement of his separated life is a lively picture of the commencement of the same life in us; the calling of Abram is a representation of *our* calling, and to that matter I shall ask your earnest attention this morning.

I. First, **EFFECTUAL CALLING IS ILLUSTRATED IN THE CALL OF ABRAM**.

We have been reading the whole of the story, and therefore I shall only need to refresh your memories with it. Read carefully the last verses of chapter 11, and the whole of chapter 12, and get the thread of the story. Abram's call was, in the first place, the result of the sovereign grace of God; the world, as a whole, was lying in heathenism; men had gradually gone astray from the one God to the worship of engraved images. Here and there there might be an exception, as in the case of a Job or a Melchisedec, but thick darkness covered the people. God had determined that He would select one family which should afterwards grow into a distinct nation, to be the conservators of the true faith. Why He selected Abram, He Himself only knows, for we know that Terah, the father of Abram, had declined into the worship of false gods. "Your fathers," Joshua tells us in his 24th chapter, and second verse, "dwelt on the other side of the flood in old times, even Terah, the father of Abram, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." That family, if not quite so corrupt as the rest of mankind, had at any rate, become corrupted, and we find the idols in the house of Laban, their descendant. Yet the sovereign grace of God pitched upon the household of Terah, and out of that

favored family the Lord of Hosts made a divine selection of the person of Abram. Why, I say again, why, remains in the inscrutable purposes of God, a thing unrevealed to us, though doubtless the choice was made by the Lord for the wisest and most God-like reasons! Abram was a man with faults. "A man also with many virtues," you reply; yes, but those virtues given to him by God's Spirit, and not the *cause* of his election, but the *result*. He is an instance of the sovereignty of God carrying out the divine declaration, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The prophets often spoke of Abraham as though the Lord's *mercy* to him was a matter to be admired, and they by no means ascribed his favored position to any personal merit in the patriarch. "Look," says Isaiah, "unto the rock from where you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from where you were dug; look unto Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah that bore you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." Here he is compared, as it were, to a quarry, or to a pit out of which the nation was dug, and to this pit they are bid to look as to a sight that will humble them—consequently I gather, not to the *merit* of their fathers, but to the *grace* of God. And again, "A Syrian ready to perish, was your father." He was called a Syrian, as if to show that by nature he was as others—and as the Syrians were idolaters, even was he; "a Syrian ready to perish," by which I understand not perishing with physical hunger or disease, but through *spiritual* darkness, and declension from the true God. "Ready to perish," and yet the eternal mercy looked on him, and saved him! Yes, whether men will accept it or not, that truth of God stands fast, forever, that "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called." *effectual* calling in all cases

follows the eternal purpose; predestination, according to the divine good pleasure, is the wellhead of all the covenant blessings which the believer enjoys—

> "Never had you felt the guilt of sin,
> Nor sweets of pardoning love,
> Unless your worthless names had been
> Enrolled to life above."

The call of Abram, in the next place, was *divinely applied and enforced.* We neither read that an angel called him, nor a prophet, nor that he came out of Ur of the Chaldeans by the motion of his own mind spontaneously. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham," says Stephen, in his dying address, "when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran." There was made to his mind a remarkable revelation of the existence and the character of the one only true God; and then, after he had been enlightened so that he knew in his inmost soul the existence and glory of Jehovah, then the message came, perhaps in audible sounds, perhaps by a forcible impression upon his mind, "Get you out from your kindred, and from your father's house." Now mark that in every gracious call by which a man is truly saved, the call comes immediately from God Himself. Agents are generally used; the minister speaks, the Bible becomes a living light, the providence is a warning which is not misunderstood, but neither minister, nor Bible, nor providence can call a man *effectually* apart from the direct manifestation of the divine power in the heart of each individual! Ah, my brothers and sisters, we may labor after souls, but until God puts *His* hand to the work, nothing is done! Our calls to dead souls leave them still in their sleep, but the voice of Jesus brings Lazarus out of the tomb! I would have you who are listeners to the truth of God never be satisfied

with the use of merely the *means;* look to the God of the means! Ask Him to reveal His arm, and the power of His grace in you, and never be content with that which only penetrates to the outward ear, or abides upon a merely verbal memory—but ask that it may go into the *heart,* and abide in the innermost spirit through the *effectual* working of God the Holy Spirit. "Christ in you" is the power of God, but there must be an inward receiving of Him by the Holy Spirit, or all will be in vain; there must be a *supernatural* work, or you cannot be saved! Much as I wish to preach a free salvation, I cannot forget that, "you must be born-again," and "no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him." Mere nature at its best falls short of eternal life; its bow is too weak to shoot to the mark! Effectual calling, then, springs from the divine purpose, and is worked by divine energy. Dear hearers, be this your prayer to the Lord who alone can save you—

"With softening pity look,
And melt my hardness down.
Strike with Your love's resistless stroke,
And break this heart of stone!"

In the case of Abram, again, the *call was personal*, and it grew more personal as it proceeded. At first, when Abram was called in Ur of the Chaldeans, he probably thought that he could persuade Terah, his father, and the rest of the family to accompany him; and he appears to have prevailed to a degree, for they went as far as Haran, but there, for reasons not known, the family stopped for a long time. How frequently it is so with us! When God begins to work in our souls, we would gladly have others go with us, and we are led, perhaps ourselves, to make a kind of compromise with them to stop half-way if they will come half-way. We vainly conceive that we may bring all

of them to feel and act as we do, whereas if the effectual call does not come to *them* as it does to us, there must be a division. Love may wish otherwise, but carnal nature and the renewed spirit cannot agree; the Lord has set a difference, and we must still expect to see Him take one of a city, and two of a family, and bring them to Zion, while others refuse to come. After a while the message came to Abram again, "Get you out from your kindred," not *with* your kindred, "and from your father's house"; and so Abram this time is obliged to leave Haran, the halting-place, and to push forward resolutely and finally for Canaan. Beloved, you and I, if ever we are to be the Lord's, must have a distinct *personal* call; all the hearing of the gospel in which I listen for other people, and am but one of a crowd, comes to nothing! But when I listen for myself, and the truth of God comes home to *me*, describing *my* case, revealing *my* misery, inspiring *my* desire, enkindling *my* hope—then it is that it becomes the power of God unto salvation to my spirit! O dear hearer, I beseech you, individualize yourself; put yourself, even in this great throng, into a mental solitude, and let the voice of God come to you, even to you, like the bean dropped into the hole in the earth which the farmer has dug on purpose for it—that there it may swell and germinate, and bring forth fruit! Nothing but a direct, distinct *personal* call coming home to heart and conscience will be of any avail!

This call to Abram was a call for *separation*; the separation must have been exceedingly painful to him, for it was so complete. "Get you out of your country"—expatriate yourself; be an alien, a stranger, and a foreigner. "Get you out from your kindred"; let the ties of nature yield to the ties of divine grace; form new relations, and yield to bonds that are not of the flesh. "Get you from your father's house," from the place of comfort and rest, the place of heir-ship and affection; acknowledge another Father, and seek another house. "Get you unto a land

that I will show you," which you could not find by yourself, but which I must reveal to you. Observe, then, the effectual call, wherever it comes to a man, is a separating sword, cutting him off from old associations; it makes him feel that this world is not his country; he lives in it as a stranger lives in a foreign land; he is in the world, but he is not of it. The apostle says," Our citizenship is in heaven." We become citizens of another city, and are aliens in these cities of earth; for Christ's sake the Christian is therefore obliged to be separated in many respects from such of his family and kindred as remain in their sins. They are living according to the flesh; they are seeking this world; their pleasure is here, their comfort below the skies; the man who is called by divine grace lives in the same house, but lives not under the influence of the same motives, nor is he ruled by the same desires. He is so different from others, that very soon they find him out, and as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the sons of the world mock the children of the resurrection. The call of grace, the more it is heard, the more it completes the separation. At first, with some believers, they only go part of the way in nonconformity to the world; they are only *partly* conformed to Jesus Christ's image, and *partly* led out of worldly influences. Indeed, this is the case with most of us, but as we ripen in the things of God, our decision for God becomes more complete, our obedience to the law of Christ becomes more perfect, and there is a greater division set between us and the world. Oh, I wish that all Christians would believe this great truth of God, and carry it out, that "you are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world." To try to be a *worldly Christian* or a *Christian worldling* is to attempt an impossible thing! "You cannot serve God and mammon." "If God is God, serve Him, and if Baal is god, serve him." Whichever is the true and the right, give your heart to it; but attempt no compromises. The very essence of the Christian faith is being separate from

the world! Not the separation of the monastic life; we are neither monks nor nuns, nor would God have us be so! Jesus Christ was a man *among* men, eating and drinking as others did, professing no asceticism, never separating Himself from the rest of mankind, but a man among men to perfection! Yet how separate from sinners was He! He was as distinct a man from all others as though He had been an angel among a troop of devils. So must you and I be. Go to the farm or to the merchandise, to the family and to the mart, but with all your mingling with mankind, still mingle not in their *principles,* nor yield obedience to the demon that rules them! "I pray not," says our Lord, "that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from the evil one." Being kept from the evil one, you will be carrying out spiritually what Abram did literally—you will be coming out from your kindred, and your father's house under the influence of the effectual call.

The call of Abram was made effectual in his heart and will, and I call your attention for a minute to his obedience to it; it was an obedience which involved in his case, great sacrifice; it must have been hard to tear himself away from his kinsfolk. At first, indeed, it seemed to have been too hard for him, for he stopped with his father, Terah, till he died at Haran. Brothers and sisters, it is no child's play to be a Christian. "If any man loves father or mother more than Me," says Christ, "he is not worthy of Me." In many cases the greatest foes to religion are our best friends; many a man has found his soul's worst enemy lying in his bosom; many a child has found that the father who nourished its body has done his best to destroy its soul. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household," says Christ, but no relationship is to stand in the way of our obedience to Christ; the fondest connection must sooner be severed, than we give up the faithfulness of our loyalty to our great Lord and King. Take heed that you form no new association which may

take you aside from Him. Be warned, Christian men and women, against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers—either in marriage or in *any* form of partnership, for it will bring you grievous sorrow. Let none but those who are in the favor of God be in your favor, and as you would not wish to be separated eternally from the beloved of your bosom, take care that you do not begin a union with those who are already separate from Christ Jesus your Lord! But if, when converted, you find yourself in connection and relationship with the ungodly, as may be very probably the case, love them! Love them more than you ever did! Be kinder than ever, more affectionate than ever, so that you may win them; but never submit yourself to sin to please them, nor pollute the chastity of your heart which belongs to Christ alone. Whatever it may cost you, if you are truly called by divine grace, come out, and leave all behind. Sing with Jane Taylor—

"You tempting sweets, forbear.
You dearest idols, fall.
My love you must not share,
Jesus shall have it all!
Though painful and acute the smart,
His love can heal the bleeding heart!"

It must have required in Abram's case much faith to be so obedient. He set out to find a land which he had never seen; he is only told in which way to steer, and God will show him where it is. Remember that in those olden times a journey such as Abram took was a much more formidable thing than now; those venerable men were rooted to the soil in which they grew. We can make a journey to America or Australia, and think but little of it; but even our grandfathers thought it a most awful thing to go out of the county in which they lived; they looked

upon it as going to the moon if any talked of immigrating to a foreign country! The further back you go, you will discover a greater tenacity in men holding them to family roots. Well, Abram must be uprooted! At more than 70 years of age he must become an immigrant; he might have asked what kind of country, but he did not—it is enough for him that God appoints the journey, and away the pilgrim goes. So, beloved, we must always unhesitatingly follow the guidance of our heavenly Father. If we are called by divine grace, we shall have abundant need to exercise faith. If you could understand the dealings of God with you; if everything went smoothly; if in all respects you prospered as the result of your religion, you might fear that you were not in the track of the people of God, for their track is marked with tribulations! It is through much tribulation that they inherit the kingdom, but if it requires all the faith that you can summon, and more, yet still hold on, for the promise of God will justify itself in the long run! If God bids you do a thing, though it should seem to be the greatest folly conceivable, yet do it, and the wisdom of God will glorify itself in your experience.

I must still keep you for a few minutes longer attentive to Abram's obedience, for I want you to notice that while it involved much loss, and required a vast amount of faith, yet it was based upon a very great promise—a promise most vast and unexampled. All were to be blessed who blessed him, and he was to become a blessing to the whole universe! Here is a strong inducement to obey, if faith can but believe the promise is true. And, brothers and sisters, when we venture for Christ's sake to strike out into the path of separation and to walk by faith, what a multitude of promises we have to cheer us onward! "Certainly I will be with you." "No good thing will I withhold from them who walk uprightly." "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

"I will never leave you nor forsake you." "He who believes in Him shall never be confused." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." "For all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Behold, brothers and sisters, the crown which is held forth to you; it is no other than Everlasting life! Behold your reward! It is the city whose gates are pearls, and whose streets are gold! Your unrivalled portion is bliss ineffable—to be with Christ, to dwell with Him in ecstatic bliss, world without end! Be of good courage then, since for all you lose by following Jesus, you shall obtain a hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come everlasting life! Be of good courage if you forsake the world, and lose friends for truth's sake—you shall obtain the friendship of immortal spirits, angels shall become your servitors, and the blood-washed shall be your brethren, Christ Himself will be your friend, and God your Father. Onward you may well proceed if you can but believe the promise is true! You have everything to gain, and that which you have to lose compared with it is less than nothing. The present light affliction incident to a godly life is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in you! See, then, brothers and sisters, and rejoice as you see it—if we have Abraham's difficulties, we also have Abram's encouragements.

Now, having thus shown you what this effectual calling is, and the obedience it brings, I would only remind you that Abram never stopped until he actually arrived at Canaan. And so a child of God when effectually called by divine grace, never gets peace or rest until he lays hold on Jesus, and so by *believing* enters into rest.

Abram may be held up as an example to us in obeying the divine call because *he went at once;* he did not pause to ask a single question; he was bid to go to Canaan, and to Canaan he went. He did his work very thoroughly—he set out for Canaan, and

to Canaan he came, having once left Haran, he did, as it were, burn the bridges behind him. He had given up all thoughts of ever returning again; if he had wished to return, he could have done so, the apostle tells us, but he had given up, forever, all his old associations. He was bound for the promised kingdom, and on to the kingdom and the unseen blessing would he speed! O that God's Spirit may call every one of us after this same fashion, and give us grace to be obedient in the same style, and to declare that if we had to give up all we have, and even life itself, yet without hesitation it should be done, for Jesus leads the way!—

"The God of Abraham praise,
At whose supreme command,
From earth I rise, and seek the joys
At His right hand.
I all on earth forsake,
Its wisdom, fame, and power,
And Him my only portion make
My shield and tower.
He by Himself has sworn;
I on His oath depend.
I shall, on eagles' wings upborne;
To heaven ascend.
I shall behold His face,
I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders
Of His grace forevermore."

For a minute, I beg you to observe the difference between the Lord's effectual call and those *common* calls which so many receive. Beloved, there are many here, I fear, who have been called to glory and immortality, but the calling was of *man,* and

by *man*. Perhaps some of us who are professors have been called not by the grace of God, but by the eloquence of a speaker, or by the excitement of a revival meeting. Beware, I pray you, of that river whose source lies not at the foot of the throne of God; take care of that salvation which does not take its rise in the work of God the Holy Spirit, for only that which comes from Him will lead to Him; the work which does not spring from eternal love will never land us in eternal life. The call of many men is such that when it comes to them, they raise many questions as to whether they shall obey it or not. The truth of God was earnestly spoken, and they cannot help feeling somewhat of its power, but they inquire what it involves, and finding that to be a Christian they must give up many of the things they love, like Lot's wife they look back and perish! Like Pliable, they travel as far as the Slough of Despond, but they like not the miry way, and therefore they scamper out on the side nearest home, and go back again to the City of Destruction. Many have I known who have had a call of a certain sort who have tried to go to Canaan, and yet to stop at Haran; they would gladly serve God, and yet live as they used to live. They think it possible to be a Christian, and yet to be a servant of the world! They attempt the huge impossibility of yoking the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the lion of the pit of hell in the same chariot, and driving through the streets of life. Ah, sirs, the call which comes from God brings a man right out; while the call which only comes to your fleshly nature leaves you with the rest of mankind, and will leave you there to be bound up in the same bundle with sinners, and cast into the same fire! Many come out of Egypt, but never arrive at Canaan; like the children of Israel who left their carcasses in the wilderness, their hearts are not sound towards the Lord; they start fairly, but the taste of the garlic and the onions lingers in their mouth, and holds their minds by Egypt's fleshpots. Like

the planets, they are affected by two impulses—one would draw them to heaven, but another would drive them off at a tangent to the world, and so they revolve, like the mill-horse, without making progress. They continue to nominally fear the Lord, and yet to serve other gods practically and in their hearts. Beware, dear friends, of the call which makes you set out, but does not lead you to hold out! Pray that this text may be true to you, "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and to the land of Canaan they came." Do not be content with praying to *be* saved—never be satisfied until you *are* saved. Do not be content with trying to believe, and trying to repent—come to Christ, and both repent and believe! And give no slumber to your eyelids till you are a penitent believer. Make a full and complete work of your believing; strive not to *reach* the strait gate, but to *enter* it, but remember, for this you must have a call from the Lord of heaven. *I* can call you as I have called many of you dozens of times, and you have gone a little way, and you have bid fair to go the whole way—but when your goodness has been as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it soon has been scattered and has gone. God grant you to receive the call of His eternal Spirit, that you may be saved!

II. There are a few minutes remaining which I shall occupy by changing the subject. If our text may very well illustrate effectual calling, so may it **PICTURE FINAL PERSEVERANCE**.

"They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and to the land of Canaan they came." That is true of every child of God who is really converted, and receives the faith of God's elect. Oh, that miserable doctrine which says that the saints set out for Canaan, but never reach the place! It is enough to make a believer's life a very hell upon earth! No matter how happy I might be, that doctrine would poison all my peace of mind; the doctrine which denies that the pilgrims to glory go from strength to strength until each of them in Zion appears before

God, but which teaches that sheep of Christ may be torn by the wolves, that the stones in the spiritual temple may be scattered to the four winds, that the members of Christ may be torn away from His sacred body, and that the spouse of Christ may be mutilated—I say it shocks my reason, my experience, my faith, my entire spiritual nature! I believe in the final perseverance of every man in whom the regenerating grace of God has worked a change of nature; if he has been born of God he cannot die; if the living seed is in him, the devil cannot destroy it, for it lives and abides forever! Because Christ lives, every believer who is one with Jesus must live also!

We set forth, then, to the land of Canaan, and blessed be God, to the land of Canaan we shall come! God has purposed it; His purpose is that the many sons should all be brought to glory by the Captain of their salvation, and has He said it, and shall He not do it? We shall reach our resting place, for the armor- bearer who leads the way is no other than Jesus Christ, the Covenant Angel, mighty to save! We shall be preserved, for round about us is a wall of fire, and above us is the shield of the Eternal and Immutable, even of Jehovah, whose love is everlasting! The way shall not weary us—He shall give us shoes of iron and brass, and as our days, so shall our strength be; the roughness of the road shall not cast us down; He will bear us as upon eagles' wings, He will give His angels charge over us, lest we dash our foot against a stone. The arrows of hell shall not destroy us, for He gives us armor of proof; there shall no evil befall us; the snares of the devil shall not entrap us, for His wisdom shall surely make a way of escape out of every temptation that shall happen to His children! Glory be to God, it is not in the power of earth and hell put together to stop a single one of the Lord's pilgrims from reaching the Celestial City! "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "I am persuaded that He which has

begun a good work in you will carry it on." "For the path of the just is as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day."—

"Each object of His love is sure
To reach the heavenly goal,
For neither sin nor Satan can
Destroy the blood-washed soul!
Satan may vex, and unbelief,
The saved one may annoy,
But he must conquer; yes, as sure
As Jesus reigns in joy,
The precious blood of
God's dear Son
Shall never be spilt in vain!
The soul on Christ believing, must
With Christ forever reign."

As you turn over this text, this afternoon, I should like you to think of these three things: we have set forth for the land of Canaan: we know *where* we are going; think much of your haven of rest; study that precious Scripture which reveals the new Jerusalem; be familiar with angelic harps; come unto the general assembly and church of the first-born; let your Sabbath contemplations be of the everlasting Sabbath so soon to dawn.

In the next place, *we know why we are going*. We are going to Canaan because God has called us to go; He gives us strength to go, and puts the life-force within us that makes us tend upward towards the eternal dwelling place, the happy harbor of the saints!

And *we know that we are going*—that is another mercy; we do not *hope* we are going to heaven, we *know* that we are going there! Christ is the road; the banner of love leads us, the fiery

cloudy pillar of providence directs us; the promises sustain us, the Holy Spirit dwells in us—of all this we are confident. Blessed be God, we doubt not these things!

Notice two or three thoughts in this text worth remembering. "They went forth." Energetic action! Men are not saved while they are asleep; no riding to heaven on feather beds! "They went forth to the land of Canaan." Intelligent perception! They knew what they were doing; they did not go to work in a blundering manner, not understanding their drift. We *must* know Christ if we would be found in Him! It must be given us to look to Him, and trust Him, understanding what is meant by so doing. Men are not to be saved through the blindness of an ignorant superstition. "They went forth to the land of Canaan, and to the land of Canaan they came." Firm resolution! They could put up with rebuffs, but they would not be put off from their resolves; they meant Canaan, and Canaan they would get. He who would be saved must take heaven by violence! "To the land of Canaan they came." *Perfect perseverance!* "He who endures to the end, the same shall be saved." Not a spurt and a rest, but constant running wins the race. All these thoughts cluster around the one idea of the true doctrine of final perseverance which the text brings out.

But, ah, dear friends, how many there are who set out to go to Canaan, but unto Canaan they come not! Some are stopped by the first depression of spirits that they meet with, and like Pliable they run home with the mud of Despond on their boots! Others turn aside to self-righteousness; they follow the directions of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and resort to Doctor Legality, or Mr. Civility—and Sinai falls upon them and crushes them! Some turn to the right hand with Hypocrisy, thinking that to *pretend* to be holy will be as good as being so; others go on the left hand to Formality, imagining that sacraments and outward rites will be as effectual as inward purity, and the work

of the Spirit in their hearts. Many fall down the silver mine where Demas broke his neck; hundreds get into Despair's Castle, and leave their bones there because they will not trust Christ, and so obtain eternal life. Some go far, apparently, but, like Ignorance, they never really go, and when they come to the river, they perish at the very last! Some, like Turn-Away, become apostates, and are dragged away by the back door to hell after all their professions! Some are frightened by the lions; some are tempted by By-Path Meadow; some would be saved, but they must make a fortune; many would be saved, but they cannot bear to be laughed at. Some would trust Christ, but they cannot endure His cross; many would wear the crown, but they cannot bear the labor by which they must attain it. Ah, you sons of men, you will turn aside to Madame Wanton, and to Madame Bubble; you will be bewitched with this, and that, and the other which ensures your *destruction,* but the beauties of the glorious Savior, the lasting joys, the *real* happiness which He has to give, these are too high for you! They are above you, and you reach not after them—or if you seek them for a while, the dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. The stone thrown up mounts not to heaven, for the attraction of earth brings it back again. O that God would be pleased to send divine grace into our hearts from His own Holy Spirit, that we too might set out in the spirit of humility, in confidence in Christ, in the power of the Spirit to the land of Canaan, and to the land of Canaan may we truly come, and the Lord shall have the praise! Amen.

844 JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH – ILLUSTRATED BY ABRAM'S RIGHTEOUSNESS – GEN. 15:6

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, December 6, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." — Genesis 15:6

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Genesis 15; Romans 4]

YOU WILL REMEMBER that last Lord's-Day morning we spoke upon the *calling* of Abram, and the faith by which he was enabled to enter upon that separated life at the bidding of the Most High. We shall today pass from the consideration of his calling to that of his *justification*, that being most remarkably next in order in his history, as it is in point of theology in the New Testament—for, "whom He called, them He also justified."

Referring to the chapter before us for a preface to our subject, note that after Abram's calling, his faith proved to be of the most practical kind, for being called to separate himself from his kindred, and from his country, he did not therefore become a recluse, a man of ascetic habits, or a sentimentalist unfit for the battles of ordinary life. No, but in the noblest style of true manliness he showed himself able to endure the household trouble, and the public trial which awaited him. Lot's herdsmen quarreled with the servants of Abram, and Abram, with great disinterestedness, gave his younger and far

inferior relative the choice of pasturage; he gave up the well-watered plain of Sodom, which was the best of the land. A little while after, the grand old man who trusted in his God showed that he could play the soldier, and fight right gloriously against terrible odds; he gathered together his own household servants, and accepted the help of his neighbors, and pursued the conquering hosts of the allied kings, and smote them with as heavy a hand as if from his youth up he had been a military man. Brothers and sisters, this everyday life faith is the faith of God's elect! There are persons who imagine saving faith to be a barren conviction of the truth of certain abstract propositions, leading only to a quiet contemplation upon certain delightful topics, or separating ourselves from all sympathy with our fellow creatures—but it is not so! Faith, restricted merely to religious exercise, is not Christian faith; it must show itself in *everything*. A merely religious faith may be the choice of men whose heads are softer than their hearts, or more fit for cloisters than markets, but the manly faith which God would have us cultivate is a grand practical principle adapted for every day in the week—helping us to rule our household in the fear of God, and to enter upon life's rough conflicts in the warehouse, the farm, or the exchange. I mention this at the commencement of this discourse because as this is the faith which came of Abram's *calling*, so also does it shine in his *justification*, and is indeed that which God counted unto him for righteousness.

Yet the first verse shows us that even such a believer as Abram needed comfort. The Lord said to him, "Fear not." Why did Abram fear? Partly because of the reaction which is always caused by excitement when it is over; he had fought boldly, and conquered gloriously, and now he fears. Cowards tremble *before* the fight and brave men *after* the victory. Elijah slew the priests of Baal without fear, but after all was over, his

spirit sank, and he fled from the face of Jezebel. Abram's fear also originated in an overwhelming awe in the presence of God; the word of Jehovah came to him with power, and he felt that same prostration of spirit which made the beloved John fall at the feet of his Lord in the Isle of Patmos, and made Daniel feel on the banks of the Hiddekel, that there was no strength in him. "Fear not," said the Lord to the patriarch, for his spirit was too deeply bowed; God would uplift His beloved servant into the power of exercising sacred familiarity! Ah, brothers and sisters, this is a blessed fear; let us cultivate it, for until it shall be cast out by perfect love, which is better still, we may be content to let this good thing rule our hearts. Should not a man, conscious of great infirmities, sink low in his own esteem in proportion as he is honored with communion with the glorious Lord? When he was comforted, Abram received an open declaration of his justification. I take it, beloved friends that our text does *not* intend to teach us that Abram was *not* justified before this time; faith *always* justifies whenever it exists, and as soon as it is exercised, its result follows immediately. The moment a man truly trusts his God, he is justified. Yet many are justified who do not know their happy condition—many to whom, as yet, the blessing of justification has not been opened up in its excellence and abundance of privileges. There may be some of you here today who have been called by divine grace from darkness into the marvelous light of God; you have been led to look to Jesus, and you believe you have received pardon of your sin, and yet, for lack of knowledge, you know little of the sweet meaning of such words as these, "Accepted in the Beloved." "Perfect in Christ Jesus." "Complete in Him." You *are* doubtless justified, though you scarcely *understand* what justification means, and you are accepted, though you have not realized your acceptance; and you are complete in Jesus Christ, though you have today a far deeper sense of your personal

incompleteness than of the all-sufficiency of Jesus. A man may be entitled to property though he cannot read the title deeds or has not, as yet, heard of their existence! The law recognizes right and fact, not our apprehension, but there will come a time, beloved, when you who are called will clearly realize your justification and will rejoice in it! It shall be intelligently understood by you, and shall become a matter of transporting delight, lifting you to a higher platform of experience, and enabling you to walk with a firmer step, sing with a merrier voice, and triumph with an enlarged heart!

I intend now, as God may help me, first to note *the means of Abram's justification;* then *secondly, the Object of the faith which justified him;* and then thirdly, *the attendants of his justification.*

I. First, brothers and sisters, **HOW WAS ABRAM JUSTIFIED?** We see in the text the great truth of God which Paul so clearly brings out in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, that Abram was *not justified by his works.* Many had been the good works of Abram; it was a good work to leave his country and his father's house at God's bidding; it was a good work to separate from Lot in so noble a spirit; it was a good work to follow after the robber-kings with undaunted courage; it was a grand work to refuse to take the spoils of Sodom, and to lift up his hand to God, that he would not take a thread even to a shoe lace! It was a holy work to give to Melchisedec tithes of all that he possessed, and to worship the Most High God, yet *none* of these are mentioned in the text, nor is there a hint given of any other sacred duties as the ground or cause, or partial cause of his justification before God. No, it is said, "He *believed* in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." Surely, brothers and sisters, if Abram, after years of holy living, is not justified by his *works,* but is accepted before God on account of his *faith*, much more must this be the case with the ungodly sinner who, having lived in unrighteousness, yet believes on

Jesus and is saved! If there is salvation for the dying thief, and others like he, it cannot be of *debt*, but of *grace*, seeing they have no good works! If Abram, when full of good works, is not justified by them, but by his *faith,* how much more we, being full of imperfections, must come unto the throne of the heavenly grace, and ask that we may be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, and saved by the free mercy of God!

Further, this justification came to Abram *not by obedience to the ceremonial law* any more than by conformity to the moral law. As the apostle has so plainly pointed out to us, Abram was justified *before* he was circumcised; the initial step into the outward and visible covenant, so far as it was ceremonial, had not yet been taken, and yet the man was perfectly justified! All that follows after cannot contribute to a thing which is already *perfect!* Abram, being already justified, cannot owe that justification to his subsequent circumcision—this is clear enough, and so, beloved, at this moment if you and I are to be justified, these two things are certain—it cannot be by the works of the *moral* law, and it cannot be by obedience to any *ceremonial* law, be it what it may—whether the sacred ritual given to Aaron, or the superstitious ritual which claims to have been ordained by gradual tradition in the Christian church. If we are indeed the children of faithful Abraham, and are to be justified in Abraham's way, it cannot be by submission to rites or ceremonies of any kind! Listen to this carefully, you who would be justified before God—baptism in itself is an excellent ordinance, but it cannot justify nor help to justify us! Confirmation is a mere figment of men, and could not, even if commanded by God, assist in justification! And the Lord's Supper, albeit that it is a divine institution, cannot in any respect whatever minister to your acceptance, or to your righteousness before God! Abram had no ceremonies in which to rest; he was righteous through his *faith,* and righteous *only* through his faith,

and so must you and I be if we are ever to stand as righteous before God at all. Faith, in Abram's case, was the only and unsupported cause of his being accounted righteous. Note, although in other cases Abram's faith produced works, and although in *every* case where faith is genuine, it *produces* good works, yet the particular instance of faith recorded in this chapter was unattended by any works. God brought him forth under the star-lit heavens, and bade him look up. "So shall your seed be," said the sacred voice. Abram did what? *Believed the promise*—that was all; it was *before* he had offered sacrifice, *before* he had said a holy word or performed a single action of any kind that the words immediately and instantly went forth, "He believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." Always distinguish between the truth of God, that living faith always produces works; and the lie, that faith and works co-operate to justify the soul. We are made righteous *only* by an act of faith in the work of Jesus Christ; that faith, if true, *always* produces holiness of life, but our being righteous before God is not *because* of our holiness in life in any degree or respect, but simply because of our faith in the divine promise. Thus says the Inspired apostle: "His faith was imputed to him for righteousness; now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification."

I would have you note that *the faith which justified Abram was still an imperfect faith,* although it perfectly justified him. It was imperfect beforehand, for he had lied as to his wife, and bid Sarai, "Say you are my sister." It was imperfect *after* it had justified him, for in the next chapter we find him taking Hagar, his wife's handmaid, in order to effect the divine purpose, and so showing a lack of confidence in the working of the Lord. It

is a blessing for you and for me that we do not need *perfect* faith to save us! "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Move to yonder place, and it shall move." If you have but the faith of a little child, it shall save you. Though your faith is not always at the same pitch as the patriarch's when he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet if it is simple and true, if it confides alone in the promise of God—it is an unhappy thing that it is not stronger, and you ought daily to pray, "Lord, increase my faith"—but still it shall justify you through Christ Jesus! A trembling hand may grasp the cup which bears a healing draught to the lip; the weakness of the hand shall not lessen the power of the medicine.

So far, then, all is clear—Abram was not justified by works, nor by ceremonies, nor *partly* by works, and *partly* by faith, nor by the *perfection* of his faith—he is counted righteous simply because of his faith in the divine promise.

I must confess that looking more closely into it, this text is too deep for me, and therefore I decline, at this present moment, to enter into the controversy which rages around it. But one thing is clear to me—if faith is, as we are told, counted to us for righteousness; it is not because faith in *itself* has merit which may make it a fitting substitute for a perfect obedience to the law of God; nor can it be viewed as a *substitute* for such obedience, for, brothers and sisters, all good acts are a duty—to trust God is our *duty,* and he who has believed to his utmost has done no more than it was his duty to have done! He who should believe without imperfection, if this were possible, would even then have only given to God a part of the obedience due; and if he should have failed in love, or reverence, or anything beside, his faith, as a virtue and a work, could not stand.

Faith cannot be its own righteousness, for it is of the very nature of faith to look out of self to Christ. If any man should say, "My faith is my righteousness," then it is evident that he is confiding in his *faith,* and this is just the thing of all others which it would be unsafe to do, for we must look altogether *away* from *ourselves* to Christ alone, or we have no true faith at all. Faith must look to the atonement and work of Jesus, or else she is not the faith of Scripture. Therefore to say that faith in and of itself becomes our righteousness is, it seems to me, to tear out the very heart of the gospel, and to deny the faith which has been once delivered to the saints. Paul declares, contrary to certain sects who rail against imputed righteousness, that we are justified and made righteous by the righteousness of Christ. On this he is plain and positive; he tells us (Rom 5:19) that, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." The Old Testament verse before us as a text this morning gives us but, as it were, the *outward* aspect of justification—it is brought to us by faith and the fact that a man has faith entitles him to be set down as a righteous man. In this sense God accounts faith to a man as righteousness, but the underlying and secret truth of God which the Old Testament does not so clearly give us is found in the New Testament declaration that we are accepted in the Beloved, and justified because of the *obedience of Christ*. Faith justifies, but not in and by itself, but because it grasps the *obedience of Christ*. "As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so *by the righteousness of one* the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." To the same effect is that verse in the second epistle of Peter (first chapter, first verse), which runs in our version as follows: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." Now,

everybody who is at all familiar with the original knows that the correct translation is, "through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." The righteousness which belongs to the Christian is the righteousness of our God and Savior, who is "made of God unto us righteousness," and hence the beauty of the old prophetic title of the Messiah, "The Lord our righteousness."

I do not wish to enter into controversy as to imputed righteousness this morning. We may discuss that doctrine another time, but we feel confident that this text cannot mean that faith in *itself*, as a divine grace or a virtue, becomes the righteousness of any man. The fact is that faith is counted to us for righteousness because she has Christ in her hand—she comes to God resting upon what Christ has done, depending alone upon the propitiation which God has set forth, and God, therefore, writes down every believing man as being a righteous man, not because of what he is in *himself*, but for what he is in *Christ*. He may have a thousand sins, yet shall he be righteous if he has faith; he may painfully transgress like Samson; he may be as much in the dark as Jephthae; he may fall as David, he may slip like Noah, but for all that, if he has a true and living faith, he is written down among the justified, and God accepts him! While there are some who gloat over the faults of believers, God spies out the pure gem of faith gleaming on their breast; He takes them for what they want to be, for what they are in heart, for what they would be if they could—and covering their sins with the atoning blood, and adorning their persons with the righteousness of the Beloved, He accepts them, seeing He beholds in them the faith which is the mark of the righteous man wherever it may be.

II. Let us pass on to consider **THE PROMISE UPON WHICH HIS FAITH RELIED** when Abram was justified.

Abram's faith, like ours, rested upon *a promise received directly from God.* "This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own body shall be your heir; and He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your descendants be." Had this promise been spoken by any other, it would have been a subject of ridicule to the patriarch, but, taking it as from the lips of God, he accepts it, and relies upon it. Now, brothers and sisters, if you and I have true faith, we accept the promise, "He who believes and is baptized, shall be saved" as being altogether divine. If such a declaration were made to us by the priests of Rome, or by any human being on his own authority, we would not think it true; but, inasmuch as it comes to us written in the sacred word of God as having been spoken by Jesus Christ Himself, we lean upon it as not the word of man, but the word of God. Beloved, it may be a very simple remark to make, but after all, it is necessary that we must be careful that our faith in the truth of God is fixed upon the fact that God has declared it to be true, and not upon the oratory or persuasion of any of our most honored ministers or most respected acquaintances. If your faith stands in the wisdom of *man,* it is probably a faith *in* man; remember it is only that faith which believes the promise because God spoke it, which is *real* faith in God! Note that, and test your faith thereby.

In the next place, Abram's faith was *faith in a promise concerning the seed.* It was told him before that he would have a seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; he recognized in this the same promise which was made to Eve at the gates of paradise, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed." "Abraham saw My day," says our Lord, "he saw it and was glad." In this promise Abram saw the one seed, as says the apostle in Galatians 3:16,

"He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to your seed, which is Christ." He saw Christ by the eyes of faith, and then he saw the multitude that would believe in Him, the seed of the Father of the faithful. The faith which justifies the soul concerns itself about Christ and not mere abstract truths; if your faith simply believes this dogma, and that, it saves you not, but when your faith believes that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses; when your faith turns to God in human flesh, and rests in Him with its entire confidence, then it justifies you, for it is the faith of Abram! Dear hearer, have you such a faith as this? Is it faith in the promises of God? Is it faith that deals with Christ, and looks alone to Him?

Abram had faith in *a promise which it seemed impossible could ever be fulfilled*—a child was to be born of his own loins, but he was nearly 100 years old, and Sarai, also, was said to be barren years before! His own body was now dead, as it were, and Sarai, as far as childbearing was concerned, was equally so; the birth of a son could not happen unless the laws of nature were reversed! But he considered not these things, he put them all aside; he saw death written on the creature, but he accepted the power of life in the Creator, and he believed without hesitation. Now, beloved, the faith that justifies us must be of the same kind! It seems impossible that I should ever be saved; I cannot save *myself;* I see absolute death written upon the best hopes that spring of my holiest resolutions—"In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing." I can do nothing! I am slain under the law! I am corrupt through my natural depravity! Yet for all this, I believe that through the life of Jesus I shall live and inherit the promised blessing! It is small faith to believe that God will save you when divine graces flourish in your heart, and evidences of salvation abound; but it is a grand faith to trust in Jesus in the teeth of all your sins, notwithstanding the

accusations of conscience—to believe in Him who justifies not merely the godly, but *the ungodly* (Rom 4:5). To believe not in the Savior of saints, but in the Savior of *sinners,* and to believe that if any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous—this is precious, and is counted unto us for righteousness.

This justifying faith was faith which dealt with *a wonderful promise, vast and sublime.* I imagine the patriarch, standing beneath the starry sky, looking up to those innumerable orbs realized he could not count them! To his outward eye, long accustomed in the land of the Chaldeans to midnight observation, the stars appeared more numerous than they would to an ordinary observer; he looked and looked again with elevated gaze, and the voice said, "So shall your seed be." Now he did not say, "Lord, if I may be the father of a clan, the progenitor of a tribe, I shall be well content; but it is not credible that countless hosts can ever come of my barren body." No, he *believed* the promise! He believed it just as it stood! I do not hear him saying, "It is too good to be true." No, God has said it—and nothing is too good for God to do; the greater the grace of the promise, the more likely it is to have come from Him, for good and perfect gifts come from the Father of lights. Beloved, does your faith take the promise as it stands in its vastness, in its height, and depth, and length, and breadth? Can you believe that you, a *sinner,* are nevertheless a *child,* a son, an heir, an heir of God, joint-heir with Christ Jesus? Can you believe that heaven is yours, with all its ecstasies of joy; eternity with its infinity of bliss, God with all His attributes of glory? Oh, this is the faith that justifies—far-reaching, wide-grasping faith that diminishes not the word of promise, but accepts it as it stands! May we have more and more of this large-handed faith!

Once more, Abram showed faith in *the promise as made to him.* Out of his own body a seed should come, and it was in *him,* and in his seed that the whole world should be blessed! I can believe all the promises in regard to *other* people; I find faith in regard to my dear friends to be a very easy matter, but oh, when it comes to close grips, and to laying hold for *yourself*, here is the difficulty! I could see a friend in 10 troubles, and believe that the Lord would not forsake him; I could read a saintly biography, and finding that the Lord never failed His servant when he went through fire, and through water, I do not wonder at it; but when it comes to one's own self, the wonder begins! Our heart cries, "What is this to me? What am I, and what is my father's house, that such mercy should be *mine*? *I* washed in blood, and made whiter than snow today! Is it so? *Can* it be? *I* made righteous through my faith in Jesus Christ— perfectly righteous! O can it be? What? For me the everlasting love of God, streaming from its perennial fountain; for me the protection of a special providence in this life, and the provision of a prepared heaven in the life to come? For me a harp, a crown, a palm branch, a throne! For *me* the bliss of forever beholding the face of Jesus, and being made like He is, and reigning with Him! It seems impossible! And yet this is the faith that we must have, the faith which lays on Christ Jesus for itself, saying with the apostle, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." This is the faith which justifies! Let us seek more and more of it, and God shall have glory through it.

III. In the third place, let us notice **THE ATTENDANTS OF ABRAM'S JUSTIFICATION.**

With your Bibles open, kindly observe that after it is written his faith was counted to him for righteousness, it is recorded that the Lord said to him, "I am Jehovah that brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." When the soul is graciously enabled to perceive its complete

justification by faith, then *it more distinctly discerns its calling*. Then the believer perceives his privileged separation, and discerns why he was convicted of sin, why he was led away from self-righteousness, and the pleasures of this world to live the life of faith. Now he sees his high calling, and the prize of it, and from the one blessing of justification, he argues the blessedness of all the inheritance to which he is called. The clearer a man is about his justification, the more will he prize his calling, and the more earnestly will he seek to make it sure by perfecting his separation from the world, and his conformity to his Lord. Am I a justified man? Then I will not go back to that bondage in which I once was held. Am I now accepted of God through faith? Then I will live no longer by sight, as I once did as a carnal man—when I understood not the power of trusting in the unseen God. One Christian grace helps another, and one act of divine grace casts a reflection upon another; *calling* gleams with double glory side by side with the twin star of *justification*.

Justifying faith receives more vividly the promises. "I have brought you," said the Lord, "into this land to inherit it." He was reminded again of the promise God made to him years before. Beloved, no man reads the promises of God with such delight, and with such a clear understanding as the man who is justified by faith in Christ Jesus, "For now," he says, "this promise is *mine*, and made to *me;* I have the pledge of its fulfillment in the fact that I walk in the favor of God; I am no longer obnoxious to His Wrath; none can lay anything to my charge, for I am absolved through Jesus Christ, and therefore if when I was a sinner He justified me, much more, being justified, will He keep His promise to me. If when I was a condemned rebel, He nevertheless in His eternal mercy called me, and brought me into this state of acceptance, much more will He preserve me from all my enemies, and give me the heritage which He has promised by His covenant of grace. A

clear view of justification helps you much in grasping the promises of God; therefore seek it earnestly for your soul's comfort.

Abram, after being justified by Faith, was *led more distinctly to behold the power of sacrifice.* By God's command he killed three bullocks, three goats, three sheep, with turtle doves, and pigeons, being all the creatures ordained for sacrifice. The patriarch's hands are stained with blood; he handles the butcher's knife; he divides the beasts, he kills the birds; he places them in an order revealed to him by God's Spirit at the time. There they are. Abram learns that there is no meeting with God except through *sacrifice.* God has shut every door except that over which the blood is sprinkled; all acceptable approaches to God must be through an atoning sacrifice—and Abram understood this. While the promise is still in his ears, while the ink is yet wet in the pen of the Holy Spirit, writing him down as justified, he must see a *sacrifice,* and see it, too, in emblems which comprehend all the revelation of sacrifice made to Aaron. So, brothers and sisters, it is a blessed thing when your faith justifies you if it helps you to obtain more complete and vivid views of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ! The purest and most bracing air for faith to breathe is on Calvary! I do not wonder that your faith grows weak when you fail to consider well the tremendous sacrifice which Jesus made for His people! Turn to the annals of the Redeemer's sufferings given us in the Evangelists; bow yourself in prayer before the Lamb of God—blush to think you should have forgotten His death which is the center of all history! Contemplate the wondrous transaction of *substitution* once again, and you will find your faith revived! It is not the study of *theology;* it is not reading books upon points of controversy; it is not searching into mysterious prophecy which will bless your soul—it is looking to Jesus crucified! That is the essential

nutrition of the life of faith, and mind that you keep to it. As a man already justified, Abram looked at the sacrifice all day long, and till the sun went down, chasing away the birds of prey as you must drive off all disturbing thoughts. So must you also study the Lord Jesus, and view Him in all His characters and offices. Be not satisfied unless you grow in divine grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Perhaps even more important was the next lesson which Abram had to learn. He was led to behold *the covenant.* I suppose that these pieces of the bullock, the lamb, the ram, and the goat were so placed that Abram stood in the midst with a part on this side, and a part on that. So he stood as a worshipper all through the day, and towards nightfall, when a horror of great darkness came over him, he fell into a deep sleep. Who would not feel a horror passing over him as he sees the great sacrifice for sin, and sees himself involved? There, in the midst of the sacrifice, he saw moving with solemn motion, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp answering to the pillar of cloud and fire which manifested the presence of God in later days to Israel in the wilderness. In these emblems the Lord passed between the pieces of the sacrifice to meet His servant, and enter into covenant with him; this has always been the most solemn of all modes of covenanting—and has even been adopted in heathen nations on occasions of unusual solemnity. The sacrifice is divided, and the covenanting parties meet between the divided pieces. The profane interpretation was that they imprecated upon each other the curse that if they broke the covenant, they might be cut in pieces as these beasts had been! But this is not the interpretation which our hearts delight in; it is this—it is only in the midst of the sacrifice that God can enter into a covenant relationship with sinful man. God comes in His glory like a flame of fire, but subdued and tempered to us as with a cloud of smoke in the person of Jesus Christ; and

He comes through the bloody sacrifice which has been offered once and for all through Jesus Christ on the tree. Man meets with God in the midst of the sacrifice of Christ! Now, beloved, you who are justified, try this morning to reach this privilege which particularly belongs to you at this juncture of your spiritual history. Know and understand that God is in covenant bonds with you; He has made a covenant of grace with you which never can be broken; the sure mercies of David are your portion. After this sort does that covenant run, "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. They shall be My people, and I will be their God." That covenant is made with you over the slaughtered body of the Son of God! God and you cross hands over Him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground! The Lord accepts us, and we enter with Him into sacred league and amity over the victim whose wounds and death ratify the compact. Can God forget a covenant with such sanctions? Can such a federal bond so solemnly sealed, be ever broken? Impossible! Man is sometimes faithful to his oath, but God is *always* so; and when that oath is confirmed for the strengthening of our faith by the blood of the Only- Begotten, to doubt is treason and blasphemy! God help us, being justified, to have faith in the covenant which is sealed and ratified with blood!

Immediately after, God made to Abram (and here the analogy still holds) *a discovery,* that all the blessing that was promised, though it was surely his, would not come without an interval of *trouble.* "Your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them 400 years." When a man is first of all brought to Christ, he often is so ignorant as to think, "Now my troubles are all over; I have come to Christ and I am saved; from this day forward I shall have nothing to do but to sing the praises of God." Alas, *conflict* remains! We must understand, for sure, that the battle

now begins! How often does it happen that the Lord, in order to educate His child for future trouble, makes the occasion when his justification is most clear to him, the season of informing him that he may expect to meet with trouble? I was struck with that fact when I was reading for my own comfort the other night, the fifth chapter of Romans; it runs thus—"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." See how softly it flows—a justification sheds the oil of joy upon the believer's head; but what is the next verse—"and not only so, but we glory in *tribulation* also: knowing that tribulation works patience," and so on. Justification ensures tribulation! Oh, yes, the covenant is yours—you shall possess the goodly land and Lebanon but, like all the seed of Abraham, you must go down into Egypt and groan, being burdened. All the saints must smart before they sing; they must carry the cross before they wear the crown. You are justified men and women, but you are not freed from trouble! Your sins were laid on Christ, but you still have Christ's cross to carry! The Lord has exempted you from the *curse*, but He has not exempted you from the *chastisement*. Learn that you enter on the children's discipline on the very day in which you enter upon their accepted condition.

To close the whole, the Lord gave to Abram *an assurance of ultimate success*. He would bring his seed into the Promised Land, and the people who had oppressed them, He would judge. So let it come as a sweet revelation to every believing man and woman this morning, that at the end they shall triumph, and those evils which now oppress them shall be cast beneath their feet! The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly! We may be slaves in Egypt for a while, but we shall come up out of it with great abundance of true riches—better than silver or

gold! We shall be prospered by our tribulations, and enriched by our trials! Therefore let us be of good cheer, for if sin is pardoned, we may well bear affliction. "Strike, Lord," said Luther, "now my sins are gone; strike as hard as You will if transgression is covered." These light afflictions which are but for a moment are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us! Let us make it the first point of our care to be justified with Abraham's seed, and then whether we sojourn in Egypt, or enjoy the peace of Canaan, it little matters— we are all safe if we are only justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Dear friends, this last word, and I send you home. Have you believed in God? Have you trusted Christ? O that you would do so today! To believe that God speaks truth ought not to be difficult, and if we were not very wicked, this would never need to be urged upon us—we would do it naturally. To believe that Christ is able to save us seems to me to be easy enough, and it *would be* if our hearts were not so hard. Believe your God, and think it no little thing to do so! May the Holy Spirit lead you to a true trust; this is the work of God—that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Believe that the Son of God can save, and confide yourself alone in Him, and He will save you! He asks nothing but faith, and even this He gives you! And if you have it, all your doubts and sins, your trials and troubles put together shall not shut you out of heaven! God shall fulfill His promise, and surely bring you in to possess the land which flows with milk and honey.

845 CONSECRATION TO GOD – ILLUSTRATED BY ABRAHAM'S CIRCUMCISION – GEN. 17:1-2

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Dec. 13, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be you perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." — Genesis 17:1-2

[Portion of Scripture read before sermon — Genesis 17; Colossians 2:10-15]

WE COMMENCED our exposition of the life of Abram with his calling, when he was brought out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and separated unto the Lord in Canaan. We then passed on to his justification, when he believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And now you will bear with us if we continue in the same subject to a further stage, and attempt to describe the fuller development of Abram's vital godliness in the open and clear revelation of his consecration to God. In the chapter before us we see his sanctification unto the Lord, his ordination to service and purification as a vessel fitted for the Master's use; all the called are justified, and all the justified are, by a work of the Holy Spirit, sanctified and made meet to be afterwards glorified with Christ Jesus.

Let me remind you of the order in which these blessings come. If we should speak of sanctification or consecration, it is not as a *first* thing, but as an elevation to be reached only by preceding steppingstones. In vain do men pretend to be consecrated to God before they are called of God's Spirit; such have yet to be taught that no strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright; they must learn what this means, "You must be born-again," for assuredly until men are brought into *spiritual* life by effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, all their talk about serving God may be answered in the words of Joshua, "You cannot serve the Lord." I speak of *consecration*, but it is not as a *first* thing, nor even as a *second* thing—for a man must be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus—or he will not possess the divine grace which is the root of all true sanctity; sanctification grows out of faith in Jesus Christ. Remember, holiness is a flower, not a root—it is not sanctification that saves, but salvation that *sanctifies;* a man is not saved by his holiness—he becomes holy because he is already saved. Being justified by faith, and having peace with God, he walks no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and in the power of the blessing which he has received by grace he dedicates himself to the service of his gracious God. Note, then, the due order of heavenly benefits—consecration to God *follows* calling and justification.

Recalling your minds to Abram's history, let me remind you that 13 years had elapsed after the time in which God had said that Abram's faith was counted to him for righteousness, and those 13 years, as far as we can gather from Scripture, were not at all so full of brave faith, and noble deeds, as we might have expected them to have been. How sure is that truth that the best of men are but men at the best—for that very man who had accepted God's promise, and had not staggered at it through unbelief, within a few months afterwards, or perhaps

a few days, was taken with a fit of unbelief! And at the instigation of his wife, Abram adopted means which were not justifiable in order that he might obtain the promised heir. He used means which may not be as vicious to him as they would be in men of modern times, but which were suggested by an unbelieving policy, and were fraught with evil: he takes Hagar to wife; he could not leave it to God to give him the promised seed; he could not leave it with God to fulfill His promise in His own time, but justifies himself in turning aside from the narrow path of faith to accomplish by doubtful methods, the end which God Himself had promised, and undertaken to accomplish!

How shorn of splendor is Abram seen when we read of him, "and Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarai!" That business of Hagar is to the patriarch's deep discredit, and reflects no honor at all upon either him or his faith. Look at the consequences of his unbelieving! Misery soon followed. Hagar despises her mistress; Sarai throws all the blame on her husband; the poor bondwoman is so harshly dealt with that she flees from the household! How much of real cruelty may be meant by the term "dealing harshly," I cannot tell, but one marvels that such a man as Abram allowed one who had been brought into such a relationship with him to be heedlessly chased from his house while in a condition requiring care and kindness! We admire the truthfulness of the Holy Spirit that He has been pleased to record the faults of the saints without extenuating them; biographies of good men in Scripture are written with unflinching integrity—their evil recorded as well as their good. These faults are not written that we may say, "Abraham did so-and-so, therefore we may do it." No, brothers and sisters, the lives of these good men are *warnings* to us as well as examples, and we are to judge them as we should judge ourselves—by the laws of right and wrong. Abram did

wrong both in taking Hagar to wife, and in allowing her to be so badly used.

In later years the child of the bondwoman mocked the child of the free woman, and an expulsion of both mother and child was necessary; there was deep sorrow in Abram's heart, a bitterness not to be told. Polygamy, though tolerated under the Old Testament, was *never* approved; it was only endured because of the hardness of men's hearts. It is evil, only evil, and that continually! In the family relationship there can be opened no more abundant and fruitful source of misery to the sons of men than lack of chastity to the marriage bond made with one wife—disguise that unchastity by what name you will. All these 13 years, as far as Scripture informs us, Abram had not a single visit from his God. We do not find any record of his either doing anything memorable, or having so much as a single audience with the Most High. Learn from this that if we once forsake the track of simple faith, once cease to walk according to the purity which faith approves, we strew our path with thorns, cause God to withhold the light of His countenance from us, and pierce ourselves through with many sorrows.

But mark, beloved, the exceeding grace of God: the way to recover Abram from his backsliding was that the Lord should appear to him, and consequently we read in our text that at 99 years of age Abram was favored with a further visit from the Most High. This brings to my remembrance the words in the book of Revelation concerning the church in Laodicea: "You are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth"—a very solemn declaration! But what follows? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me," which means just this—that for recovery out of a horrible state of languishing and

lukewarmness, there is no remedy but the coming of Jesus Christ to the soul in near and dear communion! Truly it was so with Abram. The Lord would bring him out of his state of distrust and distance into one of high dignity and sanctity—and He does it by manifesting Himself to him, for the Lord talked with Abram—

"Midst darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun!
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And He my rising sun!"

Breathe a prayer, my brothers and sisters—"Lord, reveal Yourself to my poor backsliding, languishing spirit! Revive me, O Lord, for one smile from You can make my wilderness blossom as the rose." On the occasion of this gracious manifestation, God was pleased to do for Abram what I think is to us an admirable and instructive illustration of the consecration of our redeemed spirits entirely to His service. I shall, this morning, as God may help me, first lead you *to observe the model of the consecrated life;* secondly, *the nature of the higher life;* and thirdly, *its results.*

I. First, then, let us notice in the words of God to Abram **THE MODEL OF THE SANCTIFIED OR CONSECRATED LIFE.**

Here it is: "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be you perfect." For a man to be thoroughly sanctified to the Master's service, he must first realize the almightiness, and all-sufficiency, and glory of God. Brothers and sisters, the God whom we serve fills all things, and has all power and all riches. If we think little of Him, we shall render little trust to Him, and consequently little obedience; but if we have grand conceptions of the glory of God, we shall learn to confide in Him most thoroughly; we shall receive mercies from Him most plentifully,

and we shall be moved to serve Him most consistently. Sin, at the bottom of it, very frequently has its origin in low thoughts of God. Take Abram's sin—he could not see how God could make him the father of many nations when Sarai was old and barren; hence his error with Hagar. But if he had remembered what God now brings to his recollection, that God is *El Shaddai,* the *all-sufficient One,* he would have said, "No, I will remain true to Sarai, for God can begin His own purposes without my taking tortuous means to accomplish them. He is all-sufficient in Himself, and not dependent upon creature strength; I will patiently hope, and quietly wait to see the fulfillment of the Master's promises." Now, as with Abram, so with you, my brothers and sisters! When a man is in business difficulties, if he believes that God is all-sufficient to carry him through them, he will not practice any of the common tricks of trade nor degenerate into that shiftiness which is so usual among commercial men. If a man believes, being poor, that God is sufficient portion for him, he will not grow envious of the rich or discontented with his condition; the man who feels that God is an all-sufficient portion for his spirit will not look for pleasure in the pursuits of vanity; he will not go with the giddy multitude after their vain mirth. "No," he says, "God has appeared unto me as God all-sufficient for my comfort and my joy; I am content as long as God is mine; let others drink from broken cisterns if they will—I dwell by the overflowing Fountain, and am perfectly content." O beloved, what glorious names our Lord deservedly wears! Whichever of His names you choose to dwell upon for a moment, what a mine of wealth and meaning it opens up to you! Here is this name, "El Shaddai." "El," that is, "the strong one," for infinite power dwells in Jehovah; how readily may we who are weak become mighty if we draw upon Him! And then, "Shaddai," that is to say, "the unchangeable, the invincible." What a God we have then, who

knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning, against whom none can stand! "El," strong; "Shaddai," unchangeable in His strength—therefore always strong in every time of need, ready to defend His people, and able to preserve them from all their foes. Come, Christian, with such a God as this, why need you abase yourself to win the good word of the wicked man? Why gad about to find earthly pleasures where the roses are always mixed with thorns? Why need you to put your confidence in gold and silver, or in the strength of your body, or in anything that is beneath the moon? You have El Shaddai to be yours! Your power to be holy will much depend upon your grasping with all the intensity of your faith the cheering fact that this God is your God forever and ever! He is your daily portion, your all-sufficient consolation; you dare not, can not, will not wander into the ways of sin when you know that such a God is your shepherd and guide!

Following up this model of the consecrated life, notice the next words—"walk before Me." This is the style of life which characterizes true holiness; it is a walking before God. Ah, brothers and sisters, Abram had walked before Sarai; he had paid undue respect to her views and wishes; he had walked, too, in the sight of his own eyes, and the inclinations of his own heart when he was allied to Hagar. But now the Lord gently rebukes him with the exhortation, "Walk before *Me."* It is remarkable that on the former divine visit to the patriarch (which we tried to interpret last Lord's-Day), the Lord's message was, "Fear not." Abram was then as it were, but a child in spiritual things and the Lord gave him comfort, for he needed it. He is now grown into a man, and the exhortation is practical and full of activity—"walk." The Christian is to put out, and use the strength and grace which he has *received.* The gist of the exhortation lies in the last words, *"Walk before Me,"* by which I understand an habitual sense of the presence of God,

or doing the right thing, and shunning the wrong out of respect to the will of God—a consideration of God in all actions—public and private. Beloved, I deeply regret when I see Christians, even in religious societies, in their calculations leaving out the greatest item in the whole calculation—namely, the divine element, the divine power and faithfulness. Of the most of mankind I may say without being censorious, that if there were no God, their course of action would not be different from what it is, for they do not feel themselves either restrained or compelled by any sense of the divine presence. "The transgression of the wicked says within my heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes." But this is the mark of the truly sanctified man of God—that he lives in every place as standing in the presence chamber of the divine Majesty; he acts as knowing that the eyes which never sleep are always fixed on him; his heart's desire is that he may never do the wrong thing, not because he has respect to worldly greatness, and may never forget the right thing; not because he is in evil company, but because God, being everywhere, he is always in company where it would be impudent rebellion to sin! The saint feels that he must not dare transgress because he is before the very face of God! This is the model of the sanctified character—for a man to realize what the Lord is, and then to act as in the immediate presence of a holy and jealous God.

The next words are, "and be you perfect." Brothers and sisters, does this mean *absolute* perfection? I shall not raise arguments against the belief of some that we may be absolutely perfect on earth; freely do I admit that the model of sanctification is perfection; it were inconsistent with the character of God for Him to give us any other than a perfect command, and a perfect standard; no law but that of *absolute perfection* could come from a perfect God; to give us a model that were not absolutely perfect were to ensure to us

superabundant imperfections, and to give us an excuse for them. God sets before His servants no rule of—"Be as good as you can," but this—"Be you *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Has any man ever attained to it? Truly we have not, but for all that, every Christian aims at it. I would far rather my child had a perfect copy to write by, though he might never write equal to it, than that he should have an imperfect copy set before him—because then he would never make a good writer at all! Our heavenly Father has given us the perfect image of Christ to be our example! He has given His perfect law to be our rule, and it is for us to aim at this perfection in the power of the Holy Spirit, and like Abram to fall upon our faces in shame and confusion of face when we remember how far we have come short of it! Perfection is what we wish for, pant after, and shall at the last obtain. We do not want to have the law toned down to our weakness! Blessed be God, we delight in the perfection of that law. We say with Paul, "The law is holy, and just, and good, but I am carnal and sold under sin." The will of God is that which we would be conformed, and if we who are believers had but one wish, and it could be granted to us at once, it would be this—to make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight. However, the word, "perfect," as I have said, bears commonly the meaning of "upright" or "sincere"—"walk before Me, and be sincere." No double dealing must the Christian have, no playing fast and loose with God or man, no hypocritical professions, or false principles; he must be as transparent as glass; he must be a man in whom there is no guile; he must be a man who has cast aside deceit in every shape—who hates it, and loathes it. He must walk before God, who sees all things, with absolute sincerity, earnestly desiring in all things, both great and small, to

commend himself to the conscience of others as in the sight of the Most High.

Brothers and sisters, here is the model of the consecrated life! Do you long to attain it? I am sure every soul that is moved by God's grace does, but if your feeling about it is like mine, it will be just that of Abram in the text, "Abram fell on his face before the Lord." For oh, how far short we have come of this! We have not always thought of God as all-sufficient; we have been unbelieving; we have doubted Him here, and doubted Him there; we have not gone to work in this world as if we believed His promise, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." We have not been satisfied to suffer, or to be poor—and we have not been content to do His will without asking questions. We might often have had addressed to us the rebuke, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Is His arm shortened at all? Is His ear heavy that He cannot hear?" Brothers and sisters, we have not always walked before the Lord! If one may speak for the rest, we do not always feel the presence of God as a check to us. There are angry words, perhaps, at the table; there is wrong-doing in the place of business; there are carelessness, worldliness, pride, and I know not what beside of evil to mar the day's labor, and when we come back at night we have to confess, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; I have forgotten my Shepherd's presence; I have not always spoken and acted as if I felt that You were always looking upon me." Thus it has come to pass that we have not been perfect! I feel ready to laugh, not the laugh of Abram, but that of thorough ridicule when I hear people talk about their being absolutely perfect. They must be of very different flesh and blood from us—or rather they must be great fools full of conceit, and utterly ignorant of themselves, for if they did but look at a single action, they would find specks in it, and if they examined but one single day, they would perceive something in which they fell short, if

there were nothing in which they had transgressed. You see your model, brothers and sisters. Study it in the life of Christ, and then press forward to it with the zeal of the apostle who said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

II. Secondly, **THE NATURE OF THIS CONSECRATION** as illustrated in this chapter. On each point briefly.

Genuine spiritual consecration begins with communion with God. Note the third verse—"Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him." By looking at Christ Jesus, His image is photographed upon our mind, and we are changed from glory to glory, as by the presence of the Lord. Distance from God's presence always means *sin,* but holy familiarity with God engenders holiness. The more you *think* of God, the more you meditate upon His works; the more you praise Him, the more you pray to Him; the more constantly you talk with Him, and He with you, by the Holy Spirit, the more surely are you upon the road to thorough consecration to His cause!

The next point in the nature of this consecration is that it is fostered by enlarged views of the covenant of grace. Read on: "As for Me, behold My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations." This is said to help Abram to walk before God, and to be perfect, from which we conclude that to grow in sanctification, a man should increase in *knowledge*, and also in the tenacity of the faith which grasps the covenant which God has made with Christ for His people which is, "Ordered in all things and sure." With your Bibles open, notice attentively that Abram was refreshed as to his own personal

interest in the covenant. Note the second personal pronoun, how it is repeated: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations." Take the sixth verse, "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and your seed after you...to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you." Thus Abram has the covenant brought home to himself; he is made to feel that he has a part and a lot therein; if you are ever to be sanctified unto God's service, you must get a full assurance of your interest in all the covenant provisions! Doubts are like wild boars of the forest which tear up the flowers of sanctification in the garden of the heart, but when you have in your soul a God-given *assurance* of your interest in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, then shall the foxes which spoil the vines be hunted to death, and your tender grapes shall give a good smell. Cry to God, beloved brothers and sisters, for strong faith to, "Read your title clear to mansions in the skies." Great holiness must spring from great faith! Faith is the root, obedience the branch—and if the root decays, the branch cannot flourish. Ask to know that Christ is yours, and that you are His, for here you will find a fountain to water your consecration, and make it yield fruit to Christ's service. Some professors act as if this were not the case; they foment their doubts and fears in order to perfect holiness; I have known Christians, when they are conscious that they have not lived as they ought to live, begin to doubt their interest in Christ, and as they say, humble themselves in order to reach after fuller sanctification of life. That is to say, they starve themselves in order to grow strong! They throw their gold out of the window in order to become rich! They pull up the very foundation of their house to make it stand secure! Beloved believer, sinner as you are, backslider as you are, believe in Jesus—let not a sense

of sin weaken your faith in Him! He died for *sinners*—"in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Cling to that cross; the more furious the storm, the more need of the life-buoy; never leave it, but make your hold firmer! Confide alone in the virtue of that precious blood, for thus only will you slay your sins, and advance in holiness. If you say within your heart, "Jesus cannot save such a one as I am; if I had marks and evidences of being God's child, I could then trust in the reward"—you have cast away your shield, and the darts of the tempter will wound you terribly! Cling to Jesus even when it is a question of whether you have a grain of divine grace in your hearts! Believe that He died for you, not because you are consecrated or sanctified, but died for you as *sinners,* and saves you as *sinners*. Never lose your simple trust in the Crucified, for only by the blood of the Lamb can you overcome sin, and be made fit for the Lord's work.

Note in reading these words, how this covenant is revealed to Abram peculiarly as *a work of divine power*. Note the run of the passage, "I will make My covenant between Me and you." "I will make you fruitful." "I will establish My covenant." "I will give unto you." "I will be your God," and so on. Oh, those glorious "wills" and "shalls." Brothers and sisters, you cannot serve the Lord with a perfect heart until first your faith gets a grip of the divine "will" and "shall." If my salvation rests upon this poor, puny arm, upon my resolves, my integrity, and my faithfulness, it is shipwrecked forever! But if my eternal salvation rests upon the great arm which bears up the universe; if my soul's safety is altogether in the hands that wheel the stars along, then blessed be His name—it is safe and well, and now, out of love to such a Savior, I will serve Him with all my heart! I will spend and be spent for Him who has thus graciously undertaken for me. Mark this, brothers and sisters; be very clear about it, and ask to have the divine working made apparent to your soul, for that will help you to be consecrated to God.

Further, Abraham had a view of the covenant in its everlastingness. I do not remember that the word "everlasting" had been used before in reference to that covenant, but in this chapter we have it over and over again. "I will establish My covenant for an everlasting covenant." Here is one of those grand truths of God which many of the babes in grace have not as yet learned, namely that the blessings of grace are blessings not given today to be taken back tomorrow, but *eternal* blessings! The salvation which is in Christ Jesus is not a salvation which will belong to us for a few hours while we are faithful to it, and will then be taken away so that we shall be left to perish. God forbid! "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent." "I am God," He says, "I change not: therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." When we put ourselves into the hands of Christ we do not confide in a Savior who might allow us to be destroyed, but we rest in one who has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Instead of the doctrine of the security of the saints leading to negligence of life, you will find that on the contrary, where it is thoroughly well received in the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, it begets such a holy confidence in God, such a flaming gratitude to Him, that it is one of the best incentives to consecration! Treasure up these thoughts, dear brothers and sisters, and if you would grow in divine grace and in conformity to Christ, endeavor to perceive your personal interest in the covenant, the divine power which guarantees its fulfillment, and the everlastingness of its character.

In considering the nature of this consecration, I would observe next, that they who are consecrated to God are regarded as new men. The new manhood is indicated by the change of name—he is called no longer Abram, but *Abraham,* and his wife is no longer Sarai, but Sarah. You, beloved, are

new creatures in Christ Jesus! The root and source of all consecration to God lies in *regeneration*. We are "born-again"—a new and incorruptible seed is placed within us which "lives and abides forever." The name of Christ is named upon us—we are no longer called sinners and unjust, but we become the children of God by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Note further that *the nature of this consecration was set forth to Abraham by the rite of circumcision.* It would not be at all fitting or decorous for us to enter into any detail as to that mysterious rite, but it will suffice to say that the rite of circumcision signified the taking away of the filthiness of the flesh. We have the apostle Paul's own interpretation of circumcision in the verses which we read just now in his epistle to the Colossians. Circumcision indicated to the seed of Abraham that there was a defilement of the flesh in man which must forever be taken away, or man would remain impure, and out of covenant with God. Now, beloved, there must be in order to our sanctification to Christ, a giving up, a painful relinquishing of things as dear to us as right eyes and right hands; there must be a denying of the flesh with its affections and lusts; we must mortify our members; there must be self-denial if we are to enter into the service of God. The Holy Spirit must pass sentence of death and cutting away upon the passions and tendencies of corrupt humanity; much must perish which nature would cherish, but die it must because divine grace abhors it.

Notice, with regard to circumcision, that it was peremptorily ordained that it should be practiced on every male of the race of Abraham, and if it were neglected, death followed; so the giving up of sin, the giving up of the body of the filth of the flesh is necessary to every believer. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Even the babe in Christ is as much to see death written upon the body of the filth of the flesh as a

man who like Abraham, has reached advanced years, and come to maturity in spiritual things. There is no distinction here, between the one and the other. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And where a supposed grace does not take away from us a love of sin, it is not the grace of God at all, but the presumptuous conceit of our own vain natures.

It is often said that the ordinance of baptism is analogous to the ordinance of circumcision; I will not controvert that point, although the statement may be questioned, but supposing it to be, let me urge upon every believer here to see to it that in his own soul he realizes the spiritual meaning both of circumcision and baptism, and then consider the outward rites—for the thing *signified* is vastly more important than the sign. Baptism sets forth far more than circumcision! Circumcision is putting away of the filth of the flesh, but baptism is the *burial* of the flesh altogether! Baptism does not say, "Here is something to be taken away," but *everything is dead* and must be buried with Christ in His tomb, and the man must rise anew with Christ. Baptism teaches us that by death we pass into the new life. As Noah's ark, passing through the death of the old world, emerged into a new world, even so by a like figure, baptism sets forth our salvation by the resurrection of Christ—a baptism of which Peter says, it is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." In baptism, the man avows to himself and others that he comes by death into newness of life according to the words of the Holy Spirit, "Buried with Him in baptism, in which also you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead." The most valuable point is the *spiritual* meaning, and on that we experience what it is to be dead to the world—to be dead and buried with Christ, and then to be risen with Him! Still, brothers and sisters, Abraham was not allowed to say, "If I get

the *spiritual* meaning, I can do without the outward rite." He might have objected to that rite on a thousand grounds a great deal more strongly than any which the hesitating have urged against baptism; but he first accepted the *rite,* as well as the thing which it intended, and straightaway was circumcised! And so I exhort you, brothers and sisters, to be obedient to the precept upon baptism, as well as attentive to the truth of God which it signifies. If you are indeed buried with Christ, and risen with Him, despise not the outward and instructive *sign* by which this is set forth!

"Well," says one, "a difficulty suggests itself as to your views"—for an argument is often drawn from this chapter, "that inasmuch as Abraham must circumcise all his seed, we ought to baptize all our children." Now, observe the *type,* and interpret it not according to *prejudice*, but according to *Scripture*. In the *type,* the seed of Abraham are circumcised; you draw the inference that all typified by the seed of Abraham ought to be baptized, and I do not quibble at the conclusion. But I ask you, who are the true seed of Abraham? Paul answers in Romans 9:8—"They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." As many as *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, are Abraham's seed! Whether eight days old in divine grace, or more or less, every one of Abraham's seed has a right to baptism; but I deny that the unregenerate, whether children or adults, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. The Lord will, we trust, call many of them by His grace, but as yet they are "heirs of wrath, even as others." At such time as the Spirit of God shall sow the good seed in their hearts, they are of Abraham's believing seed, but they are not so while they live in ungodliness and unbelief, or are as yet incapable of faith or repentance. The answering person in *type* to the seed of Abraham is by the confession of everybody, the

believer, and the believer ought, seeing he is buried with Christ *spiritually*, to prove that fact by his *public* baptism in water, according to the Savior's own precept and example. "Thus," said Christ, "it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," as He went down to the river Jordan. At the Jordan was He sprinkled? Why go down to a river to be *sprinkled?* Why went He *down into the water* to be *sprinkled?* "Us." Did He mean babes? Was He a babe? Was not He, when He said "us," speaking of the faithful who are in Him? "And thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," that is, all His saints. But how does baptism fulfill all righteousness? Typically thus—it is the picture of the whole work of Christ; there is His immersion in suffering; there is His death and burial; there is His coming up out of the water representing His resurrection; His coming up the banks of Jordan represents His ascension. It is a typical representation of how He fulfilled all righteousness, and how the saints fulfilled it in Him. But, brothers and sisters, I did not intend to go so far into the outward sign, because my soul's deepest desire is this, that as Abraham by the outward sign was taught that there was a putting away of the filth of flesh, which must be, or death must follow— so are we taught by baptism that there is an actual death to the world, and a resurrection with Christ, which must be to every believer, however old or however young—or he has not part or lot in the matter of consecration to God, or, indeed, in salvation itself!

III. I have a third head, but my time is gone, and, therefore, just these hints. **THE RESULTS OF SUCH A CONSECRATION**.

Immediately after God's appearing to Abraham, his consecration was manifest, first, in his prayer for his family— "O that Ishmael might live before You!" Men of God, if you are indeed the Lord's, and feel that you are His, begin now to intercede for all who belong to you! Never be satisfied unless they are saved, too; and if you have a son, an Ishmael,

concerning whom you have many fears and much anxiety—as you are saved, yourself, never cease to groan out that cry, "O that Ishmael might live before You!"

The next result of Abraham's consecration was that he was most hospitable to his fellow men. Look at the next chapter. He sits at the tent door, and three men come to him. The Christian is the best servant of humanity in a spiritual sense. I mean that for his Master's sake, he endeavors to do good to the sons of men; he is, of all men, the first to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked, and as much as lies in him to do good unto all men—especially unto such as are of the household of faith.

The third result was Abraham entertained the Lord, Himself, for among those three angels who came to his house was the King of kings, the infinite One! Every believer who serves his God does, as it were, give refreshment to the divine mind. I mean this—God took an infinite delight in the work of His dear Son; He said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and He takes a delight, also, in the holiness of all His people. Jesus sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied by the works of the faithful. And you, brothers and sisters, as Abraham entertained the Lord, entertain the Lord Jesus with your patience and your faith, with your love and your zeal when you are thoroughly consecrated to Him.

Once more, Abraham became the great *intercessor* for others. The next chapter is full of his pleadings for Sodom. He had not been able to plead before, but after circumcision, after consecration, he becomes the King's remembrancer—he is installed into the office of a priest, and he stands there crying, "Will You not save the city? Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?" O beloved, if we do but become consecrated to God, thoroughly so, as I have attempted feebly to describe, we shall become mighty with God in our pleadings! I believe one holy man is a greater blessing to a nation than a whole regiment

of soldiers! Did not they fear more, the prayers of John Knox than the arms of 10,000 men? A man who lives habitually near to God is like a great cloud forever dropping with fertile showers. This is the man who can say, "The earth is dissolved, I bear up the pillars thereof." France had never seen so bloody a revolution had there been men of prayer to preserve her. England, amidst the commotions which make her rock to and fro, is held fast because prayer is put up incessantly by the faithful. The flag of old England is nailed to her mast—not by the hands of her sailors—but by the prayers of the people of God! These, as they intercede day and night, and as they go about their spiritual ministry, these are they for whom God spares nations—for whom He permits the earth to still exist! And when their time is over, and they are taken away, the salt being taken from the earth, then shall the elements dissolve with fervent heat—the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up, but not until He has caught away the saints with Christ into the air shall this world pass away! He will spare it for the righteous' sake. Seek after the highest degree of sanctity, my dear brothers and sisters; seek for it, labor for it! And while you rest in faith alone for justification, be not slack concerning growth in divine grace, that the highest attainments be your ambition, and God grant them to you, for His Son's sake. Amen.

846 GOOD CHEER FOR CHRISTMAS – ISA. 25:6

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Dec. 20, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well-refined." — Isaiah 25:6

WE HAVE NEARLY ARRIVED at the great merry-making season of the year. On Christmas Day we shall find the entire world in England enjoying themselves with all the good cheer which they can afford. Servants of God, you who have the largest share in the person of Him who was born at Bethlehem, I invite you to the best of all Christmas fare—to nobler food than makes the tables groan; bread from heaven, food for your spirit! Behold how rich and how abundant are the provisions which God has made for the high festival which He would have His servants keep, not now and then, but all the days of their lives!

God, in the verse before us, has been pleased to describe the provisions of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although many other interpretations have been suggested for this verse, they are all stale and utterly unworthy of such expressions as those before us. When we behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed—

when we see Him offered up upon the chosen mountain, we then discover a fullness of meaning in these gracious words of sacred hospitality, "The Lord shall make a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow." Our Lord Himself was very fond of describing His gospel under the same image as that which is here employed. He spoke of the marriage supper of the king, who said, "My oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready." And it did not seem as if He could even complete the beauty of the parable of the prodigal son without the killing of the fat calf, and feasting, and music, and dancing! As a festival on earth is looked forward to, and looked back upon as an oasis, and a desert of time, so the gospel of Jesus Christ is to the soul its sweet release from bondage and distress—its mirth and joy! Upon this subject we intend to speak this morning, hoping to be helped by the great Master of the feast. Our first head will be *the feast;* the second will be the *banqueting hall in this mountain;* the third will be *the Host*—"The Lord shall make a feast"; and the fourth head shall be *the guests*—He shall make it "unto all people."

I. First, then, we have to consider **THE FEAST**.

It is described as consisting of provisions of the best, no, of the best of the best! They are fat things, but they are also fat things full of marrow; wines are provided of the most delicious and invigorating kind, wines on the lees, which retain their aroma, their strength, and their flavor—but these are most ancient and rare, having been so long kept that they have become well-refined; by long standing they have purified and clarified themselves, and brought themselves to the highest degree of brightness and excellence. The best of the best God has provided in the gospel for the sons of men!

Let us attentively survey the *blessings of the gospel,* and observe that they are fat things, and fat things full of marrow.

One of the first gospel blessings is that of complete justification. A sinner, though guilty in himself, no sooner believes in Jesus than all his sins are pardoned! The righteousness of Christ becomes *his* righteousness, and he is accepted in the Beloved. Now, this is a delicious dish indeed! Here is something for the soul to feed upon; to think that I, though a deeply guilty sinner, am absolved of God, and set free from the bondage of the law; to think that I, though once an heir of wrath, am now as accepted before God as Adam was when he walked in the Garden without a sin; no, *more* accepted still, for the divine righteousness of Christ belongs to me, and I stand complete in Him—beloved in the Beloved—and accepted in Him, too! Beloved, this is such a precious truth of God, that when the soul feeds on it, it experiences a quiet peace, a deep and heavenly calm to be found nowhere on earth. This is a kind of honey which never sours, to be assured by the word of God, and by the witness of the Holy Spirit within you, that you are reconciled and brought near by the blood, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This is a choice mercy! This is a fat thing indeed, but this is not all, it is a fat thing full of marrow. There is an inner lusciousness in it when you reach the heart and soul of the matter, transcendent in richness; remember that this righteousness, this acceptance, this *justification* becomes ours in a perfectly legal way—one against which Satan himself cannot raise an objection, for our Substitute has paid our debt, therefore we are righteously discharged. Christ has fulfilled the law and made it honorable for us, therefore are we justly accepted in the Beloved. Here is marrow indeed, when we perceive the truth and reality of the substitution of Jesus, and grasp with heart and soul the fact of our great Surety standing in our place at the bar of justice, that we might stand in His place—in the place of honor and love! What bliss it is to cry with the apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of

God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, yes, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Come here, all you whose spiritual tastes are purified by divine grace, and feed upon this choice provision which shall be sweet to your taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb!

Meditate upon a second blessing of the covenant of grace, namely, that of *adoption*. It is plainly revealed to us that as many as have believed in Christ Jesus unto the salvation of their souls, they are the sons of God. "Beloved, now we are the sons of God." Here indeed, is a fat thing! What? Shall a worm of the dust become a child of God; a rebel be adopted into the heavenly family; a condemned criminal not only forgiven, but actually made a *child* of *God*? Wonder of wonders! "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!" "To which of the kings and princes of this earth did He ever say, You are My Son"? He has not spoken thus to the great ones, and to the mighty, but God has chosen the base things of this world, and things that are despised, yes, and things that are not, and made these to be of the seed royal! The wise and prudent are passed over, but babes receive the revelation of His love. Lord, why me? What am I, and what is my father's house that you should speak of making *me* Your child? This gloriously fat thing is also "full of marrow"; there is an inner richness in adoption for, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." Well does the apostle remind us that if children, then heirs, for we are thus assured of our blessed heritage. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours. And you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not,

with Him, also freely give us all things?" Here are royal dainties of which the word has said most truly, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Your house."

Passing on from the blessing of adoption, let us remember that every child of God is the object of eternal love without beginning, and without end; this is one of the fat things full of marrow. Is it so, that I, a believer in Jesus, unworthy as I am, am the object of the *eternal* love of God? What transport lies in that thought! Long before the Lord began to create the world, He had thought of *me;* long before Adam fell, or Christ was born, and the angels sung their first choral over Bethlehem's miracle, the eyes and the heart of God were towards His elect people! He never *began* to love them—they were always "a people near unto Him." Is it not so written, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, with lovingkindness have I drawn you"? Some kick at the doctrine of election, but they are ill advised since they labor to overturn one of the noblest dishes of the feast. They would dam up one of the coolest streams that flow from Lebanon; they would cover over with rubbish one of the richest veins of golden ore that make the people of God rich! This doctrine of a love that has no commencement is the best wine of our Beloved, and "that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of them who are asleep to speak." How joyously does the heart exult and leap for very joy when this truth of God is brought home by the witness of the Spirit of God; then the soul is satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord!

Equally delightful is the corresponding reflection that this love which had no beginning shall have no end, for He is a God who changes not. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." When He has once set His heart of love upon a man, He never turns away from doing him good; He says by the mouth of His servant the prophet, that He hates putting

away; though we sin against Him often, and provoke Him to jealousy, yet as the waters of Noah, so is His covenant to us, for as the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so He swears that He will not be angry with us nor rebuke us. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." Why, beloved, this indeed, is a fat thing! And I may add that it is full of marrow when you remember that not merely has the Lord *thought* of you from everlasting, but *loved* you. Oh, the depth of that word, "love," as it applies to the infinite Jehovah, whose name, whose essence, whose nature is love! He has loved you with all the immutable intensity of His heart—never more and never less—loved you so much that He gave His only-begotten Son for you. He has loved you so well, that nothing could content Him but making you to be conformed into the image of His dear Son, and causing you to partake of His glory that you may be with Him where He is! Come, feed on this, you heirs of eternal life, for here are fat things full of marrow!

We would not, beloved, have completed this list if we had omitted one precious doctrine which needs a refined taste perhaps, but which when a man has once learned to feed on it, seems to him to be best of all—I mean the great truth of *union* to Christ. We are plainly taught in the word of God that as many as have believed are *one with Christ*—they are married to Him, there is a conjugal union based upon mutual affection. The union is closer still, for there is a vital union between Christ

and His saints; they are in Him as the branches are in the vine; they are members of the body of which He is the head; they are one with Jesus in such a true and real sense, that with Him they died, with Him they have been buried, with Him they are risen, with Him they are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places. There is an indissoluble union between Christ and all His people: "I in them, and they in Me." Thus the union may be described—Christ is in His people the hope of glory, and they are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God. This is a union of the most wonderful kind, which figures may faintly set forth, but which it were impossible for language completely to explain! Oneness to Jesus is one of the fat things full of marrow, for if it is so indeed, that we are one with Christ—then because He lives we must live also; because He was punished for sin, we also have borne the wrath of God in Him; because He was justified by His resurrection, we also are justified in Him; because He is rewarded and forever sits down at His Father's right hand, we also have obtained the inheritance in Him—and by faith grasp it now, and enjoy its earnest. Oh, can it be that this aching head already has a right to a celestial crown, that this palpitating heart has a claim to the rest which remains for the people of God, that these weary feet have a title to tread the sacred halls of the New Jerusalem? It is so, for if we are one with Christ, then all He has belongs to us, and it is but a matter of time, and of gracious arrangement when we shall come into the full enjoyment! Truly, in meditation upon this topic, we may, each of us, exclaim, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips."

I cannot bring forth all the courses of my Lord's banquet; one serving man cannot bear before you the riches of such a surpassing feast! But I would remind you of one more, and that is the doctrine of *resurrection, and everlasting life.* This poor world

dimly guessed at the immortality of the soul, but it knew nothing of the resurrection of the body—the gospel of Jesus has brought life and immortality to light, and Jesus Himself has declared to us that he who believes in Him shall never die. "He who believes in Me, though he were dead, yet should he live." Jesus *is* the resurrection and the life! Not the soul only, but the *body* also shall partake of immortality, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed! We expect to die, but we are assured of living again. If the Lord comes not, we know that our bodies shall see corruption, but here is our comfort—we dread no annihilation, that dark shadow never crosses our spirits! We dread no hell, no "purgatory," no judgment—Christ has perfected forever them who are set apart; none can condemn whom He absolves. The saints shall judge the angels, and sit with their Lord in the day of the great assize! To us the coming of Christ will be a day of joy, and of rejoicing; we shall be caught up together with Him; His reign shall be our reign, His glory our glory! Comfort one another with these words, and as you see your brothers and sisters departing one by one from among you, sorrow not as those who are without hope, but say unto each other, "They are not lost, but they have gone before us," for, "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." Here are fat things full of marrow, for ours is a glorious hope, and full of Immortality! Our expected immortality is not that of mere existence; it is not the barren privilege of life without bliss, existence without happiness—it is full of glory! "We shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is." We shall be with *God*, at whose right hand there is fullness of joy, and pleasures forevermore! He shall make us to drink of the river of His pleasures; songs and everlasting joy

shall be upon our heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away!—

"Oh, for the no more weeping,
Within that land of love!
The endless joy of keeping
The bridal feast above!
Oh, for the hour of seeing
My Savior face to face!
The hope of ever being
In that sweet meeting place."

Thus I have set before you a few of the fat things full of marrow which the King of kings has set before His guests at the wedding feast of His love.

Changing the run of the thought, and yet really keeping to the same subject, let me now bring before you the goblets of wine; "wines on the lees, wines on the lees well-refined." These we shall consider as symbolizing the joys of the gospel. What are these? I can only speak of those which I have myself been permitted to sip. One of the dearest joys of the Christian life is a sense of perfect peace with God. Oh, I tell you when one is quiet for a while, and the din and noise of business is out of one's ears, it is one of the most delicious things in the entire world to meditate upon God and to feel He is no enemy to me, and I am no enemy to Him! It is beyond comparison to feel I love Him; if there is anything that I can do to serve Him, I will do it; if there is any suffering which would honor Him, if He would give me the strength to endure it, it should be my happiness though it caused me to die a martyr's death a thousand times! If I could but honor my God, my Father and my Friend, all should be acceptable to me; there is nothing between the Lord and me by way of difference or alienation. I

am brought near through the blood of His dear and only-begotten Son; He is my God, my Father, and my all. And I am His child! Some of us have tried the imaginary happiness of laughter—we have mixed with the giddy throng, and tasted the wines of the house of carnal merriment—but our honest experience is that one single draught from the cup of *salvation* is worth rivers of worldly mirth—

"Solid joys and lasting pleasures
Only Zion's children know!"

A quiet heart, resting in the love of God, dwelling in perfect peace, has a royalty about it which cannot for a moment be matched by the fleeting joys of this world!

Our joy sometimes flashes with a brighter light, but even then it is not less pure and safe. You may look upon this wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it moves itself aright, for there is no woe, no redness of the eyes reserved for those who drink even to inebriation of this sacred wine! This sacred exhilaration is caused by a sense of *security*. When a child of God has looked well to his Redeemer and seen the merit of the precious blood, and the power of the never-ceasing plea, feels himself safe, perfectly safe. I do not understand the child of God reading his Bible, and yet being afraid of being cast into hell; I can understand that the fear may cross his mind lest after all, he should prove a castaway, but as he approaches once again to the foot of the cross, and looks up to Jesus, he feels that it cannot be. None were ever cast away who stood at the foot of the cross! It is written, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." A child of God, with no hope but what he finds in Christ, has no cause to think his eternal state to be insecure! All are safe who are in Christ, even as all were safe who were in Noah's ark. No flood, no storm could hurt the

man of whom it was said, "The Lord shut him in." The Lord has shut in all His people in Christ, and they are eternally safe in Christ; when the spirit knows that, "there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," then is it replenished with delight! When one feels that live or die, work or suffer, all is well, how free from care is the heart; how divinely joyful to know that if one should lose all his earthly substance, the Lord will provide; that if one should be tempted, tempted greatly, yet with the temptation the way of escape shall be made. Here is assurance rich with consolation! When one feels that all is safe, all safe *eternally*, for life or death all secured, I tell you that this is wine on the lees, wine on the lees well-refined—and he who wins a draught need not envy the angels their celestial banquets!

This joy of ours will sometimes rise to an elevation yet more sublime when it is caused by *communion with God*. Believers, while engaged in prayer and praise, in service and in suffering, are enabled by the Holy Spirit to hold high converse with their Lord. Do not imagine that Abraham's speech with God was an unusual privilege; the father of the faithful did but enjoy what all the faithful ones participate in according to the divine grace given them. We tell God our grief, discoursing upon our sorrows not in fiction, but declaring them in real conversation as when a man speaks with his neighbor, and meanwhile the Lord's Spirit whispers to us with the still small voice of the promise such words as calm our minds, and guide our feet. Yes, and when our Beloved takes us into the banqueting house of real conscious fellowship with Himself, and waves the love-banner over us, our holy joy is as much superior to all merely human mirth, as the heavens are above the earth! Then do we speak and sing with sacred zest, and feel as if we could weep for very joy of heart, for our Beloved is ours, and we are His! His left hand is under our head, and His right hand does

embrace us, and our only fear is lest anything should grieve our Beloved, and cause Him to withdraw Himself from us—for it is heaven on earth, and the fair foretaste of heaven above to see His face, to taste His love. Communion with Christ is as the wine on the lees well-refined.

We will place on the table one more goblet of which you may drink as much as you will. We have provided for us the pleasures of hope—a hope most sure and steadfast, most bright and glorious, the hope that what we know today shall be outdone by what we shall know tomorrow; the hope that by-and-by what we now see, as in a glass darkly, shall be seen face to face. We shall say, in heaven, as the Queen of Sheba did in Jerusalem, "The half has not been told us." We are looking forward to a speedy day when we shall be unburdened of this creaking tabernacle, and being absent from the body shall be present with the Lord! Our hope of future bliss is elevated and confident. Oh, the vision of His face! Oh, the sight of Jesus in His exaltation! Oh, the kiss of His lips—the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant," from that dear mouth, and then forever to lie in His bosom! Begone, you cares! Begone, you sorrows! If heaven is so near, you shall not molest us; the inn may be a rough and poverty-stricken one, but we are only *travelers*, not tenants upon lease! This is not our place of resting! We are on our journey home! Beloved, in the prospect of the quiet resting places in the land which flows with milk and honey, you have wines on the lees well-refined!

If we were not limited to time this morning, as, alas, we are, I would have reminded you that these joys of the believer are ancient in their origin, for that is shown in the text. Old wines are intended by "wines well-refined." They have stood long on the lees, have drawn out all the virtue from them, and have been cleared of all the coarser material. In the East, wine will be improved by keeping even more than the wines of the West,

and even so the mercies of God are the sweeter to our meditations because of their antiquity. From old eternity, before ever the earth was, the covenant engagements of everlasting love have been resting like wines on the lees, and today they bring to us the utmost riches of all the attributes of God! I would also have reminded you of the fatness of their *excellence*, because the wine on the lees holds its flavor, and retains its aroma, and there is a fullness and richness about the blessings of divine grace which endears them to our hearts. The joys of grace are not fantastical emotions, or transient flashes of a meteoric excitement—they are based on substantial truths of God, they are reasonable, fit, and proper. They belong not to the superficial and frothy emotions of mere feeling, but are deep, solemn, earnest emotions justified by the clearest judgment. Our bliss is not of the foam and the surge—it dwells in the innermost caverns of our heart. I would also remind you of their refined nature. No sin is mingled with the joys of the gospel and the delights of communion—they are well-refined! Gospel joys are elevating—they make men like angels! As *in* the gospel, God comes down to men, so *by* the gospel men go up to God! I might also have shown you how absolutely peerless are the provisions of divine grace; there is no feast like that of the gospel, no meat like the flesh of Jesus, no drink like His blood, no joys like that which crowns the gospel feast!

II. I can say no more. The table is before you, and now we must pass on with great brevity to notice **THE BANQUETING HALL**.

"*In this mountain";* there is a reference here to three things, the same symbol bearing three interpretations. First *literally*, the mountain upon which Jerusalem is built. I do not doubt that the reference is here to the hill of the Lord upon which Jerusalem stood; the great transaction which was fulfilled at Jerusalem upon Calvary has made to all nations a great feast; it

was there where that center cross bore upon it One who joined earth and heaven in mysterious union; it was there where amidst thick darkness the Son of God was made a curse for men; it was there where sorrow culminated, and joy was consummated. It was there on that very mountain where Jews and Gentiles met together, and with clamorous wrath cried, "Let Him be crucified!" It was there in the giving up of the Only-Begotten, whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed, that the Lord made a feast of things. Everything I have spoken of this morning is found in Christ! *He* is the resurrection, and the life—in Him we are justified, adopted, and made secure; every drop of joy we drink streams from His flowing veins.

A second meaning is *the church.* Frequently Jerusalem is used as the symbol of the church of God, and it is within the pale of the church that the great feast of the Lord is made unto all nations. I am, in the truest sense, a very sound churchman; I am, indeed, a *high* churchman—a most determined stickler for the church; I do not believe in salvation outside of the pale of the church; I believe that the salvation of God is confined to the church, and to the church alone. "But," says one, "what church?" Yes! That's the question! God forbid I should mean by that either the Baptist church, or the Independent church, or the Episcopalian church, or the Presbyterian, or any other—I mean the *church of Jesus Christ*—the company of God's chosen, the fellowship of the blood-bought, the family of believers! Be they where they may, for *them* is provided the feast of fat things; whatever outward and visible church they may have associated themselves with, they shall drink of the wines on the lees well-refined. But the feast is only to be found where they are found who put their trust in Jesus; there is but one church in heaven and earth, composed of men called by the Holy Spirit, and made to live anew by His quickening power; and it is through

the ministry of *this* church that an abundant feast is spread for all nations; a feast to which the nations are summoned by chosen herald, whom God calls to proclaim the good news of salvation by Jesus Christ!

But, brothers and sisters, the mountain sometimes means the church of God exalted to its latter-day glory. This mountain is to be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. This text will have its grandest fulfillment in the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Then shall the glory of the gospel be unveiled more clearly than at this present time; men shall have a fuller perception of the glory of the Lord, and a deeper enjoyment of His grace while happiness and peace shall reign with unmolested quiet. Soon shall come the golden age which has been so long foretold, for which we cry with unceasing expectation; the Lord send it speedily, and His be the praise!

III. Thirdly, let us think of ***THE HOST*** *of the feast.*

"In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things." Mark well the truth of God that in the gospel banquet there is not a single dish brought by *man!* The Lord makes it, and He makes it *all.* I know some would like to bring a little with them to the banquet; something at least by way of trimming and adornment, so that they might have a share of the honor, but it must not be! The Lord of hosts makes the feast, and He will not even permit the guests to bring their own wedding garments, for they must stop at the door, and put on the robe which the Lord has provided, for salvation is all divine grace from first to last, and all of Him who is wondrous in working, and who does all things according to the counsels of His will. Out of all the precious truths of God which I spoke of at the beginning of this sermon, there is not one which comes from any source but a divine one! And of all the joys which I tried feebly to picture, there is not one which takes its

rise from earth's springs—they all flow from the eternal fount! The Lord makes the feast, and observe, He does it, too, as Lord of hosts, as a sovereign, as a ruler doing as He wills among the sons of men—preparing what He wills for the good of His creatures, and compelling whom He wills to come to the marriage feast. The Lord provides sovereignly as Lord of hosts, and all-sufficiently as Jehovah. It needed the all-sufficiency of God to provide a feast for hungry sinners; no other than the infinite "I AM" could provide a feast substantial enough to supply the needs of immortal spirits, but HE has done it, and you may guess of the value of the provisions by the nature of our entertainer. If God spread the feast, it is not to be despised; if the Lord has put forth all the omnipotence of His eternal power and Godhead in preparing the banquet for the multitude of the sons of men, then depend upon it, it is a banquet worthy of Him! It is one to which we may come with confidence, for it must be such a banquet as our souls require, and such as the world never saw before. O my soul, rejoice in your God and King! If He provides the feast, let Him have all the glory of it. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory." O King immortal, eternal, invisible, you fed Your children in the wilderness with manna which dropped from heaven, and with water that flowed out of the flinty rock, and they gave thanks unto Your name, but now You fill us with *nobler* food! They did eat manna and are dead, but we live on the *immortal* bread, even Jesus, and therefore we can never die! They drank of the water which flowed from the rock, and yet they thirsted again, but we shall never thirst, but forever abide near to You, while the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us unto living fountains of water! Therefore, blessed be Your name, yes, a thousand times blessed be Your name, O Most High! Let all heaven say, "Amen," to the praises of our hearts, and let the multitude of Your children here on earth, for whom

this feast is spread, laud and magnify, and bless Your name from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same!

IV. Lastly, a word or two upon **THE GUESTS**. The Lord has made this banquet, *"for all people."* What a precious word this is, "for all people." Then this includes not merely the chosen people, the Jews, whose were the oracles, but it encompasses the poor uncircumcised Gentiles who by Jesus are brought near! The barbarian is invited to this feast; the Scythian is not rejected; the polished Greek finds an open door; the hardy Roman shall meet with an equal welcome; Caesar's household, if they come, shall receive a portion, and so shall the beggar's kin. Blessed be God for that word, "unto all people," for it permits missionary enterprise in every land; however degraded a race may be, we have here provision made for it; this feast of fat things is made as much for the Sudra as for the Brahmin; the gospel is as much to be preached to the degraded Bushman as to the civilized Chinese! Dwell on that word, *"all people,"* and you will see it includes the rich—for there is a feast of fat things for them such as their gold could never buy; and it includes the *poor*, for they, being rich in faith, shall have fellowship with God! "All people." This takes in the man of enlarged intelligence and extensive knowledge, but it equally encompasses the illiterate man who cannot read. The Lord makes this feast "for all people"; for you old people, for if you come to Jesus, you shall find that He is suitable for you; for you young men and maidens, and you little children, for if you put your trust in God's appointed Savior, there shall be much joy and happiness for you; "For all people!" I think if I were now seeking, and had not laid hold on Christ, this word, "all people," would be a great comfort to me because it gives hope to all who desire to come! None have ever been rejected of all who have ever come to Christ and asked for mercy; it is still true, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Some very odd

people have come to Him; some very wicked people, some very hardened people; and the door was never closed in anyone's face. Why should Jesus begin hard dealings with *you?* He cannot, because He cannot change! If He says, "Him who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," be one of the "hims" that come, and He cannot cast you out! There is another thought, namely that between the covers of the Bible there is no mention made of one person who may *not* come; there is no description given of a person who is forbidden to trust Christ. I should like you to look the Bible through, you who dream that Jesus will reject you, and find where it is said, "Such a one I will reject; such a one I will refuse." When you find such a rejecting clause, then you will have a right to be unbelieving—but till you do, I beseech you do not needlessly torment yourself! Why needlessly sow doubts and fears? There will be enough of them without your making them for yourself; do not limit what the Lord does not limit! I know He has an elect people; I rejoice in it; I hope you will rejoice in it too, one day; and I know that His people have this marrow and fatness provided for them, and for them, alone—but still, this does not at all conflict with the other precious truth of God that *whoever believes in the Son of God has everlasting life!*

If you believe in Jesus Christ, all these things are yours! Come, poor trembler, the silver trumpet sounds, and this is the note it rings, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" The harsher trumpet of the law, which waxed exceedingly loud and long at Sinai had *this* for its note, "Set bounds about the mount; let none touch it lest they die." But the trumpet for Calvary sounds with the opposite note! It is, "Come and welcome! Come and welcome, sinner, come! Come as you are! Come as sinful as you are, hardened as you are, careless as you think you are, and having no good thing whatever, come to your God in Christ!" O may you come to

Him who gave His Son to bleed in the sinner's place—and casting yourself on what Christ has done, may you resolve, "If I perish, I will trust in Him; if I am cast away, I will rely on Him." You shall not perish, but for you there shall be the feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well-refined! The Lord bless you very richly, for His name's sake. Amen.

847 JOYFUL TRANSFORMATIONS – ISA. 42:16

A Sermon
Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, Dec. 27, 1868,
by the
REV. C. H. SPURGEON
At The Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." — Isaiah 42:16

IN THE PURSUIT OF HOLINESS the pilgrim is often surrounded with darkness; while in the pathway of evil the traveler is dazzled with a glare of light; it is the way of the tempter to make the downward path as attractive as possible with the flaring splendor of carnal pleasure; sin is surrounded with a fascinating luster which enchants the unwary seeker of pleasure, and leads him to his own destruction. Look at the palace of firewater, dedicated to the demon of drunkenness— it is brighter than any other house in the street; see how it glitters with abundant lamps, and mirrors, and burnished brass; rich with color are the flowers which bloom at the mouth of the old serpent's den. As the sirens in the old classic fable enchanted mariners with their songs, so that beneath the spell of their music, they turned the prows of their vessels towards the rocks of sure destruction, even so sin compels the sons of men to make shipwreck of their souls. Evil seems to be surrounded evermore with a light that dazzles and fascinates, even as the brightness of the candle attracts the moth to its destruction. As for the way of *righteousness* and *truth*, it appears from the text that murky clouds frequently rest upon it, and the

way appears rough and crooked; otherwise it were not necessary to say, "I will make darkness light before them." Neither is it necessary that a divine hand should interfere to make the crooked straight. Brothers and sisters, the day of evil commences with a flattering morning, and changes into a tenfold night, but God's day, the day of good, begins at eventide. Like the primeval days of the creation, the evening and the morning were the first day; we who follow the Lord Jesus have our *night* first, and our day has yet to dawn, the sun of which shall no more go down. God keeps the best wine until the last for us, while at the banquet of Satan, they set forth the best wine, and afterwards that which is worse. Yes, the dregs are wrung out in the end for the wicked of the earth to drink, but as for the righteous, they have their draughts of wormwood *here*, before their high festival begins, to give them appetite and zest for the banquets where wines on the lees well-refined shall satiate their souls!

The subject of this morning is the great promise of God, that although His people shall sometimes be enveloped in gloom, their darkness shall be turned to light. Before the advance of faith the most terrible things lose their terror. We shall use this one truth of God *in reference to believers first,* and then briefly turn it to the *encouragement of earnest seekers.*

I. First, in addressing **THE BELIEVER**, let us ring the bell of the text again. It has a sweet silver voice—*"I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."*

Believer, observe that there often lies before you a grim darkness. Upon that darkness let us make these comforting observations; first, that much of the darkness is of your own imagining; as we feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, so do we feel a thousand afflictions in the fear of sorrows which will never come. Probably the major part of our griefs are born, nourished, and perfected entirely in an anxious, imaginative

brain. Many of our sorrows are not woven in the loom of providence, but are purely homespun, and the pattern of our own invention. Some minds are especially fertile in self-torture; they have the creative faculty for all that is melancholy, desponding, and wretched; if they were placed in the brightest isles beneath unclouded skies where birds of fairest wing poured out perpetual melody, and earth was rich with color and perfume, they would not be content till they had imagined for themselves a sevenfold Styx, an infernal Tartarus, a valley of death-shade! Their ingenuity is stimulated even by the mercies of God, and that which would make others *rejoice* causes them to *tremble* lest the enjoyment should prove short-lived; like certain painters, they delight in heavy masses of shade. My brother, my sister, *you may perhaps have before your mind this very morning what seems a thick wall of horror, and yet it is nothing but a cloud!* Waiting, you imagine the obstruction to increase, but plucking up courage, and advancing to meet the imaginary horror, you will yet laugh at yourself and at your foolish fears; and you will wonder how it was that you ever could have been cast down at nothing at all—and distressed by that which had no existence except in your dreams! I remember well, one night, having been preaching the word in a country village. I was walking home alone along a lonely footpath; I do not know what it was that ailed me, but I was prepared to be alarmed when, sure enough, I saw something standing in the hedge—ghastly, giant-like, and with outstretched arms! Surely, I thought, for once I have come across the supernatural! Here is some restless spirit performing its midnight march beneath the moon, or some demon of the pit of hell! I deliberated with myself a moment, and having no faith in ghosts, I plucked up courage and resolved to solve the mystery. The monster stood on the other side of a ditch, right in the hedge; I jumped the ditch and found myself grasping an old tree which some

waggish body had taken pains to color with a little whitewash—with a view to frighten simpletons, no less! That old tree has served me a good turn full often, for I have learned to *leap at difficulties* and find them vanish or turn to triumphs! Half our afflictions are only appalling in prospect because we do not know what they are; if we will but in faith patiently await them, they will be but light and transient; thus by chasing away the gloom of our dark imagination, God often makes darkness light before us.

Much again, of the darkness which does really exist is *exaggerated*. There is some cause for alarm, but not one half the cause which your fancy pictures. "All these things are against me," says Jacob, "Joseph is not, Simeon is not; and now you will take Benjamin away." There was something in this complaint. Joseph was not with his father, Simeon was kept in ward—but the old man had pictured Joseph devoured of an evil beast, and Simeon given up to be a perpetual slave in a foreign land; his fears had magnified the trouble which existed. And, believer, so probably it is with you. You shall find that the load which seems now to be far too ponderous for you to lift shall be easily carried on the shoulders which divine grace shall strengthen if you have but confidence enough to venture upon the task. That cross is not made of iron—it is only a wooden one; it may be painted with iron colors, but iron it is not! It has been carried, yes, and a weightier one by far has been carried by other men before—shoulder it like a man, shoulder it like a man of God! Take up your cross daily and go forward with your Master, and you shall find that mountains shrink to molehills, giants are seen to be but dwarfs, dragons and beasts are but bats and owls, and the leviathan himself, a defeated foe!

Remember, too, that in many cases *troubles disappear at the very moment when we expect them to be overwhelming*. While we are anticipating them, they seem to block up the pathway

completely, and leave no door of escape, but on our venturesome advance to them, they are not there at all, they have fled before us! See the host of Israel, they have escaped out of Egypt, but they are pursued by their taskmasters. They come to a spot where they are enclosed on either hand by mountains, while the chariots of Egypt are in the rear; how is it possible for them to escape? They are entangled in the land; the wilderness has shut them in! "Forward," cries the prophet, "forward, hosts of God!" But how can they advance? The Red Sea rolls right in their path; but no sooner do the feet of the priests touch the waters of the sea, than the depths are divided—the waters stand upright as a heap, for God has made a pathway for His people through the heart of the sea! No better road could be desired than that which they found in the sandy bed of the sea. The trouble which certainly appeared insurmountable, became the subject of triumph; Miriam's song, and the voices of the daughters of Israel had in them a higher exultation than they could ever have known if they had not been able to cry aloud, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." Brothers and sisters, your trials may in a like case vanish as soon as you arrive at them! You do not know what plan God has in store; He has an unused shaft which shall be the arrow of the Lord's deliverance for you; the Lord has a counterplot for the plots of your enemies. You see but a part of His scheme—you have not as yet discovered the whole of His resources, and when He brings out His wonderful plan more fully, you will stand in amazement, and even bless His name for the trial because it furnished so noble an opportunity for revealing to you the faithfulness and the power of your God! The same thing which occurred at the Red Sea also happened to the hosts of God when they came to the Jordan, for Jordan was driven back, and fled at the presence of the God of Israel!

If you should have trouble upon trouble, you shall also experience deliverance upon deliverance! Think of that mighty instance in which it was proved that God can clear the darkest skies, and give us day for night! I refer to the case of Hezekiah. What a blasphemous and insulting letter was that which came from Rabshakeh! What reviling language was that which the foul-mouthed lieutenant of Sennacherib hurled at Judah's king! Poor Hezekiah was a man of a holy and tender spirit, and was sorely dismayed, but when he spread that wretched letter before the Lord, and bowed himself in sackcloth, little did he know how graciously God would prevent the sorrow from ever coming to him in any other shape but in that of *talk* and *boasting!* "Thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it; by the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, says the Lord." And so it was! And so, O child of God, may it be with the troubles which now block *your* pathway—they shall vanish as you advance!

Reflect, again, that where this does not exactly occur, and the trial *does* really come, yet the Lord has a way of making the trials of His people to cease when they reach their culminating point. As the sea, when it reaches the highest mark of flood, can advance no further; but after pausing for a while to enjoy the fullness of its strength, must then return to its ebb, so with our most desperate sorrows; they reach the point designed and then they recede. See Abraham! God had bade him sacrifice his son; Abraham, probably mistaking the Lord's meaning, thought that he was to slay the child of promise! He proceeds to Mount Moriah, piles the altar, takes with him the wood, binds his son, and places him upon the altar. But just as he has unsheathed the knife, and is about to perform the act of solemn obedience by sacrificing that which he held most dear, a voice

is heard—"Lay not your hand upon the lad, neither do you anything unto him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me." In the nick of time God intervenes, but mark when that is—namely when the patriarch has proved the *complete* renunciation of his *own* will, and given up everything to the *will of God*—then deliverance comes! So shall it be with you, O tried believer! When the trial has been submitted to in your own heart, and you have laid aside your self-will and obstinacy, and are no longer murmuring, and repining, and rebelling—then shall God take away the coals of the furnace because the gold is purified! That is a grand story of Alexander's confidence in his friend and physician. When the physician had mixed him a potion for his sickness, a letter was put into Alexander's hand warning him not to drink the medicine, for it was poisoned. He held the letter in one hand, and the cup in the other, and in the presence of his friend and physician, he drank up the draught; and after he had drained the cup, he bade his friend look at that letter and judge of his confidence in him. Alexander had unstaggering faith in his friend, which did not admit of doubt. "See now," he said, "how I have trusted you." This is the assurance which the believer should exercise towards his God. The cup is very bitter, and some tell us it will prove to be deadly; they tell us that it is so nauseous that we shall never survive the draught; Unbelief whispers in our ear, "Your coming tribulation will utterly crush you." Drink it, my brothers and sisters, and say "If He slays me, yet will I trust in Him!" It cannot be that God could be unfaithful to His promise, or unmindful of His covenant! Your trial, then, will cease when it culminates; He will make darkness light before you when the darkest hour of the night has struck.

Brothers and sisters, there is one most encouraging reflection concerning the adversity which lies before us, namely,

that every trial of our pilgrimage life was *foreseen of God*, *and we may depend upon it that it has been forestalled.* Many a besieged city has been captured because the siege was not expected, and therefore stores of provision and ammunition were not laid up for the evil day. But God, who laid up seven years of food in Egypt against the seven years of famine which He ordained, takes care to lay by in store for His saints against coming emergencies. How readily might Moses have been anxious about the food for the tribes in the desert! "How shall such a host be fed? Where shall we find water? Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" But in simple faith Moses led the chosen people into the wilderness, and lo, the heavens dropped with a rain of plenty, and the flinty rock gave forth its cooling streams so that the host knew no lack for 40 years! Though they had neither gathered harvests nor vintage in all that space of time, yet *did Jehovah provide!*

Once more be it remembered that if trial should come upon any one of us in its fullest force, and in no way should God mitigate the fury of the storm, yet we have His promise for it, and may rest confidently therefore, that as our days, our strength shall be. I think I have before remarked to you that to be exempt from trouble would not be a desirable thing, for the life of a man who has no trial is uneventful, poor of incident, uninteresting, ignoble, barren; but the life of a man who has done business in great waters has something noble and manly in it! And considering that divine grace is always proportioned to the trial, I think it were wise to choose the trial for the sake of obtaining the grace which is promised with it! I noticed in a shop window last week a little invention of singular interest. A small metal wire with a circular disk at each end was suspended by a thread and continued, without ceasing, to oscillate between two small galvanic batteries, first touching one, and then the other. A little card informed me that this piece of metal had

continued to move to and fro between those two batteries for more than 30 years, and had, during that time passed over 6,000 miles! The whole affair was so enclosed within a glass case that nothing was likely to disturb it, and so it kept the even tenor of its way with a history which could be summoned up in two lines of plainest prose—to and fro, to and fro, for 30 years, and that was its whole monotonous history! Men's quiet lives are much after the same order; they have gone to business on Monday morning, and home at night; the same on Tuesday and all the days of the year— no dire struggles, no fierce temptations, no gracious victories, no divine experiences of heavenly love; their whole inner life is meager of interest because so free from every trial. But look at the man who is subject to trials—temporal and spiritual, and acquainted with difficulties of every sort, he is like yon mass of iron on the prow of a gallant ship which has crossed the Pacific, and bathed itself in the Atlantic! Storms have dashed upon it; a myriad waves have broken over it; it has seen the terrors of all the seas, and gleamed in the sunlight of both hemispheres; it has served its age most gloriously—and when old and worn with rust, a world of interest surrounds it.

Let us, if our trials multiply, remember that divine grace in abundance will be given with them, and the mingled trial and the grace will make our lives sublime, prevent our being mere dumb driven cattle, and give us kinship with those who, through much tribulation, have ascended to their thrones! The battle and the storm, the strife and the victory, the depression and the uplifting, and all else that betides us in a varied and eventful life, shall help to make our eternal rest and glory the more sweet to us. Let us leave these musings upon expected glooms, relying confidently upon the promise that the Lord will make darkness light before us, by some means or other, and will in no wise fail us in the hour of need!

For a minute or two let me more especially invite you again, children of God, to dwell upon the promise that the Lord will make your darkness light. How soon can Omnipotence accomplish this! It takes *us* much time to create light; we must form companies and erect machinery before we can turn the night of our great cities into a partial day! But tomorrow morning, however black the previous night may have been, the great Father of Lights will illuminate our whole nation in a few minutes; He will make each wave of the sea, and each dewdrop of the lawn to gleam with silvery sheen! God has but to bid the sun accomplish his course, and the world is lit up and the shadows flee away! How perfectly the work is done! The illumination is unrivalled in lavish glory. All *our* means of enlightenment are poor when compared with the sunlight, and so scant that we must measure its cubic feet and dole it out for gold, while the Lord pours His infinitely superior illumination in measureless oceans over hill and dale, field and city—gladdening the cottage as well as the palace, and burnishing the beetle's wings as well as the eagle's pinions! Even thus our heavenly Father can readily enough turn the deepest sorrows of His people into the most sublime joys, and He needs not to vex the sons of men with labor in order to achieve His purpose of pity! His own right hand, His own gracious Spirit can pour forth a fullness of consolation in a moment.

Notice for your comfort some of the ways in which the Lord of Love banishes the midnight of the soul: sometimes He removes all gloom by the sun of His providence; He bids prosperity shine into the window of the hovel, and the poor grow rich; He lifts the beggar from the dunghill, and sits him among princes; the wings of angels bear healing to the sick, and the man long tossing on his bed walks forth to breathe the pure sweet air so long denied him. The great Arbiter of all events does but turns the wheel of fortune, and those who were lowest

are highest—the last are first, and the first last! He can do the same for any of us, both in temporals, and in spirituals, if so it seems good to Him; He has but to ordain it so, and our poverty will be exchanged for plenty. Our Lord often cheers His people with the moon of their experience, which shines with borrowed light, but yet with a brightness, calm and tranquil, well-beloved of the sons of sorrow. He bids us remember the days of old, and our spirit makes diligent search—we find that He has never left His people, neither has He been treacherous to us! We remember when we were in a like case to the present; we note that we were well sustained and ultimately delivered; and so we are encouraged to believe that today shall be as the past, and yet more abundant. Frequently our heavenly Father cheers His children by *a sight of Jesus going before them.* That path between overhanging rocks is so dark, that I, a poor timid child, shrink back from it; but how is my courage restored as I see Jesus bearing the lantern of His love, and going before me into the thick darkness! I hear Him say, "Follow Me," and while He speaks I perceive a light streaming from His sacred person! Every thorn of His crown gleams like a star! The jewels of His breastplate flash like lamps, and His wounds gleam with celestial splendor! "Fear not," He says, "for in all your afflictions I have been afflicted; I was tempted in all points like as you are, though without sin." Who can tell the encouragement given to the heir of heaven by the fact that the elder brother has passed through all the dark passages which leads to the promised rest! God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without chastisement; He who always did His Father's will, yet had to suffer. Courage, my heart! Courage! If Jesus suffered—if that pang which tears your heart first was felt by Him, you may be of good cheer indeed!

Better still is the comfort derived from the grand truth of God that Jesus is actually present in the daily afflictions of

believers! Jesus knocks at my door and says, "Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse; come with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards!" I look forth from the window into the cold and dreary night, and I answer Him, "The night is black and cheerless; I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? I cannot arise and follow You." But the Beloved is not thus to be refused. He knocks again, and He says, "Come forth with Me into the fields, let us lodge in the villages. There will I give you My loves." Overcome by His love, I arise and go with my heavenly Bridegroom; if the raindrops fall pitilessly upon me, yet it is most sweet to see that His head is also filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night; the howling wind tosses His garments as well as mine; His feet tread the same miry places as my own, and all the while He calls me His beloved, His love, His dove, His undefiled, and tells me of the land which lies beyond the darkness. And He speaks of the mountains of myrrh, and of the beds of spices—the top of Amana, Shenir, and Hermon! My soul is melted while my beloved speaks, and my heart feels it is sweet beyond expression to walk with Him, for lo, while He is near me, the night is lit up with innumerable stars, the sky is aglow with glory—every cloud flames like a seraph's wing, while the pitiless blast is all unable to chill the heart which burns within while He talks with me by the way! In later years you and I are apt to speak to one another of that dark night and its marvelous brightness, of that cold wind that was so strangely tempered; and we will say to one another, "I would gladly pass through a thousand nights in such company! I would be willing to go on a midnight journey forever with that dearest of friends, for oh, where He is, night is day! In His presence, suffering is joy! When He reveals Himself, pains are pleasures, and earth

blossoms with flowers of Eden." Thus does the Well-Beloved by His presence make our darkness light.

Oftentimes you and I have known by experience how the Lord has made our darkness light when in a moment a text of Scripture has flashed up before our eyes like a beacon fire. I bless God there are parts of this precious book which I do not only retain in my memory, but in my heart. They have been so applied to my soul in times of need that to forget them would be utterly impossible! They have burned their way into my inner nature, and have become part and parcel of my consciousness. You cannot of yourself, make a text so full of life and power by merely thinking of it—nor by praying over it, nor by studying the original, but the Holy Spirit quickens the word even as He quickens us. A word from the Lord will at times rise up from the page as though it had lain there like a sleeping angel; it will grasp us by the hand, embrace us, and revive us till in wonder we cry out, "Oh, precious and inexhaustible word of God! Oh, sweet word fresh from the lips of Jesus, how is it I could have read you so often, but never understood your fullness and preciousness till now?" This is one of the ways of the Lord by which He makes darkness light, by snatching a firebrand from the altar of His word, and waving it as a torch before us that we may advance in its light!

Thus you see, beloved, God can readily turn our darkness into light. Now the text leads us a little further, and speaks of *"crooked things."* So, Christian, for a moment think of the crooks of your lot. Like the pathway of the children of Israel through the wilderness, your course appears to be backward and forward like the path which winds deviously through the woods among briers and thorns; the faithful Friend of pilgrims knows the way that you take—all your steps are ordered of the Lord, and in due time, according to His word, He will make them all straight for you. Perhaps the crookedness of your lot lies in

your poverty; you never have more than barely enough; food and raiment you have had, but still it has been dry bread, and scant raiment. So far from faring sumptuously, you have almost known the need of Lazarus at the rich man's gate; you have reached thus far on your journey, but still yours has been a life of need and great distress. You thank God! You do not repine—still you know well that need is a *crooked* thing!

Or perhaps you have suffered some very crooked calamity; your dear husband was taken away when the children needed most his training care, and when the labor of those strong arms was needed to find sustenance for the little ones. Alas, poor widow, that was a very crooked loss for you! Or perhaps yonder husband has buried his beloved wife, and feels that his loss is irreparable—a crooked thing which he cannot understand! He cannot guess why the all-wise God has permitted such a mother to be taken from children who needed her molding hand; if some other people had died, you could have comprehended the reason—they were ripe and ready, but here was the young and active whose life appeared so necessary, and she has been taken away from you, leaving behind a fountain of perennial tears. This is the crooked thing in your lot. Perhaps during the late panic you suffered very severely. You had not been one of the speculators, and had not ventured beyond your depth, but still, incidentally the fall of others dragged you down. You do not quite understand the reason for that heavy blow; it is a crooked thing altogether; you have looked at it this way and that way, but you cannot see the why and the wherefore. You believe that God is wise, but it remains a matter of belief in this case—you cannot as yet see it to be a wise thing. Possibly your crook lies in a trying family at home. Woe to those who have crooked sons—sharper than an adder's tooth is an unthankful child! Have you a graceless daughter? Alas, what a trial is yours! Have you an ill-tempered, malicious wife, or a harsh, unchristian

husband? Do you yourself love the truth of God, and have you a partner who hates good things? Will you go home today to hear the voice of blasphemy from your next of kin? Yours is a crook, indeed!

Worse than all, if you have no other crook, I am sure you will confess to a crooked *self*. If your own heart were not your plague, all the rest would matter little. Oh, what with our pride, our sloth, our evil desires, our angry temper, our doubts and fears, and despondencies, *self* is the worst crook a man has to carry! Then it may be you have crooked temptations. You are tempted to profanity; you hate the very thought of it, but still, the horrible suggestions haunt you! You are tempted to vices from which, by divine grace, you have been preserved, but towards which as with a hurricane, Satan would whirl you! Your temptations abound day by day; you appear to yourself to be like a man beset with 10,000 bees— they compass you about, yes, they compass you about, and you know not how to destroy them! As many as your thoughts, so many your temptations seem to be. Well, these are all crooked things, and in such a fallen world as this, crooked things will always be very common.

Now comes the promise—"God will make all the crooked things in the way of His people straight." It may be that they are straight now, and that the making straight is only to make them seem so to us, for oftentimes that which we thought to be a misfortune was the best thing that could ever occur to us! We complain of our crosses, yet are not our crosses our best estates? How often we kick against our highest good; we tear up that herb in the garden which has the noblest medicine in every leaf; oh for grace to know that there is much real good in *sorrow*, and that our trials are only crooked because our eyes are not focused!

The Lord also can bend the crooked straight, and what will not bend He can break. How often in a family the ungodly Saul

has been made into a holy Paul! The crooked character has been bent straight— and where the man would not bend straight, the terrible judgment of God has taken away the crook out of the household, so that the righteous might have peace and comfort! Do not be afraid, believer—the Lord's great axe can clear a way through the thick forests of your greatest trials! Do you not see the great Pioneer going before you; His goings forth were of old, and by the name of "The Breaker" is He known, since He breaks down all that can hinder the march of His people. Like the engineers in the advance of an army, those grand old sappers and miners who clear the way for the host; even so will the Lord cast up a highway for all His saints until He shall bring them to the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is He.

If He does not do this, He will give you power to leap over the difficulty; He will bid you, His servant, go straight on in the path of duty; and strength, not your own, shall be given you so that you shall say with one of old, "By my God have I gone through a troop! By my God have I leaped over a wall." You shall cry like Deborah, "O my soul, you have trod down strength." If our pathways were always clear in the way of duty, where would be our faith? But when we force our way to heaven through crowds of enemies—hewing a lane by main force through the squadrons of hell, *then* is our great Captain glorified, and His grace made resplendent! Let us be of good courage then, for the Lord will make the crooked straight at the end!

Two lessons, and then I shall turn to address a few words to the seeker. One is to the child of God; if God will thus make all your darkness light, and all your crooked things straight, do not prevent your troubles; they are darkness now; leave them alone, man, and they will turn to light! They are crooked now—well, leave them to ripen, and God will make them straight.

Some fruit which you gather from your trees is of such a nature that if you were to try and eat it in the autumn, it would be very sour, and would make you very sick, but just store it up a little, and see how luscious and juicy it becomes! It is a pity to destroy the fruit, and pain yourself by premature use! It is just so with your troubles; they are all darkness now—do not meddle with them. Leave them till God has ripened them and turned them into light. Yonder man is employed in carrying sacks of flour every day; he carries so many hundredweight each time, and in the day it comes to tons, and so many tons a day will come to an enormous mass in a year. Now, suppose on the first of January this man was to calculate the year's load and say, "I have all that immense mass to carry! I cannot do it!" You would remind him that he has not to carry it *all at once*—he has all the workdays of the year to carry it in. So we put all our troubles together and we cry, "However shall I get over them?" Well, they will only come one at a time, and as they come, the strength will come with them! A man who has walked a thousand miles did not traverse the thousand miles at a step, nor in a day; he took his time and did it. And we also, must take our time; with patience we shall accomplish our work. A fine lesson for us all is that word *wait*, wait, WAIT.

Our second remark is this, always believe in the power of prayer, for if God promises to make your darkness light, He will be required to do it for you; and when you inquire of Him to do it, He will do it because He has so promised. I wish we believed in prayer; I am afraid most of us do not. People will say, "What a wonderful thing it is that God hears George Muller's prayers!" But is it not a *sad* thing that we should think it *wonderful* for God to hear prayer? We have certainly come to a pretty pass when we think it wonderful that God is true! Much better faith was that of a little boy in one of the schools at Edinburgh who had attended the prayer meetings, and at last

said to his teacher who conducted the prayer meeting, "Teacher, I wish my sister could be got to read the Bible. She never reads it." "Why, Johnny, should your sister read the Bible?" "Because if she should once read it, I am sure it would do her good, and she would be converted and be saved." "Do you think so, Johnny?" "Yes, I do, sir, and I wish the next time there's a prayer meeting, you would ask the people to pray for my sister that she may begin to read the Bible." "Well, well, it shall be done, John." So the teacher announced that a little boy was very anxious that prayers should be offered that his sister might begin to read the Bible, but little John was observed to get up and go out. The teacher thought it very unkind of the boy to disturb the people in a crowded room, and go out like that, and so the next day when the lad came, he said, "John, I thought that was very rude of you to get up in the prayer meeting and go out; you ought not to have done it." "Oh! sir," said the boy, "I did not mean to be rude, but I thought I should just like to go home and see my sister reading her Bible for the first time." That is how we ought to believe, and wait with expectation to see the answer to prayer! The girl *was* reading the Bible when the boy went home; God had been pleased to hear the prayer, and if we could but trust God after that fashion, we should often see similar things accomplished! Do not say, "Lord, turn my darkness into light," and then go out with your candle as though you expected to find it dark; but, after asking the Lord to appear for you, expect Him to do so, for according to your faith so will it be done unto you!

II. And now, just a few words before we depart, **TO THE SEEKER**.

Some here have long been desirous of finding peace with God, but they are still troubled, and tossed to and fro in their minds. Now, my dear friend, we have felt great joy in seeing your anxiety, but we are beginning to feel great sorrow to think

that that anxiety should last so long, and that you should be so unbelieving as not at once to put your trust in the blessed Lord Jesus. He is *able* to save you, and He *will* save you right now, if you trust Him. It seems a very simple thing to rest alone on Him, and simple as it is, it is most effectual for the soul's peace and joy. We are grieved to think that you have been so long refusing to give Christ the credit which He so richly deserves. Now, perhaps it may be you are puzzled about some *doctrinal* question; you have been asking your friends to explain this and that to you, and you have not yet had it all cleared up. Let me say I am afraid you never will—for there are difficulties about our holy religion which will never be explained on this side the grave, and perhaps not even on the other! If our religion were within our comprehension, we would feel it did not come from God; but being greater than our brain can grasp, we see in this some traces of the infinite God who, in revealing Himself, does not display all His glory, but only a part of it to the sons of men. Dear friend, believe that God's dear Son is able to save you, and trust in Him! When you have done that, all these doctrinal difficulties, as far as they are at all important will vanish! He has said it, and you shall prove it true, "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." You shall say to yourself, "How could I have raised so many quibbles? How foolish it was of me to be always debating and questioning when eternal mercy was freely presented to me!"

Perhaps your darkness today arises from a very deep depression of mind. Your notion is that you can never believe in Jesus Christ till this depression is removed; but let me tell you your notion is wide of the truth, for the fact is you are not at all likely to rise out of your depression until you *first* believe in Jesus! Sad and sorrowful as you are, what hinders you to believe in the infinite Son of God as able to put away your sin? He must be able; the death of such a one must have had an

amount of merit in it not to be limited; oh, if you can do Him the honor to trust Him, though you are like poor smoking flax, He will not quench you! Though you are worthless and weak as a bruised reed, yet if you can trust Him, you are saved! O rely on Him, I pray you! For your soul's sake rest in the precious blood and you shall find your depression vanish, your darkness shall be light, and your crooked things shall be made straight! "Ah," you say, "but I labor under a load of sin!" Truly there is enough in your sin to make you troubled *were it not that for this purpose Christ was born and came into the world, that He might take away sin!* Why that great sacrifice on Calvary's cross, if not for great offenses? Don't you see that it is the very blackness of your sin that makes you *need* a Savior? Don't you know that Christ came not to call the righteous, but *sinners* to repentance? In due time He died for the ungodly such as you; O throw your weary soul into His arms! Why do you look about after this and that? Why are you deceived with, "Lo here, and lo there," looking to this and that for comfort? Come to Him! Come empty, naked, and filthy! Come to be made everything that is good through Him! "Yes, but," you say, "my nature is so evil." Well, but your depravity is known and provided for in the text. Your sinfulness, like the crookedness mentioned in the text, shall be made straight! The Lord can overcome your natural disposition; whatever the peculiar form of your besetting sin, the Holy Spirit is more than a match for it! Though you have sinned very foully, He can forgive, and though you feel a strong temptation to sin in the same way again, He can correct the tendency in your nature, and give you new longings which shall overcome the old! O that my Lord had His due of you—then you would not doubt Him! Blessed Savior, King of kings, and Lord of lords deigning to stoop to suffer and to die, how can men doubt You? How can they look into Your dear face, and yet distrust You? How can they see Your blessed hands, and

feet, and riven side, and yet suspect You? O sinner, cast yourself on Jesus, and you shall have joy and peace given you today!

Three things I want you to notice in the text, and I have done. That which saves us is not what *is*, but what *will* be. "I *will make darkness light."* "I *will make crooked things straight."* The crooked thing is really crooked now, but there is a transformation in store; sinner, it is not what you are *now* that is to be your salvation; you are dark and crooked, but your salvation shall yet be *given* to you. You shall be light in the Lord, and upright through His grace.

Note secondly, it is not what *you* can do, but what *God* can do. *"I will* make darkness light." The sinner shall not turn his darkness into light, but *"I,"* Jehovah, I who can do all things; I, who can create and can destroy, *"I will* make darkness light before you, and crooked things straight."

Notice again that this work may not be yours at once, but it shall be soon. It does not say, "I will make darkness light *today."* Still it does say, *"I will."* Ah, then, let us look forward to the brightness which we cannot yet see, and rejoice in the straightness which as yet we do not discern! God will keep His word to the minute, and His eternal "shalls" and "wills" shall never fall to the ground!

I pray God will bless the word to you who are tried believers, to give you peace and confidence; and to you who are seeking sinners, that you may trust in Christ, and find salvation. The Lord bless you richly, for His name's sake. Amen.